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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on a practicum that was designed to improve the behavior of at-risk youth. It targeted seventh- and eighth-grade students who attended a 12-week middle school violence prevention program which utilized a multisensory approach in conjunction with group counseling. This practicum included an educational component for parents and school personnel and was implemented in an inner-city public middle school. After examining the extent of the problem, the report describes how a proactive violence prevention program was developed, coordinated, and implemented at the middle school. Results of the program indicate that the violence-oriented behavior of the students decreased, and they increased their understanding of violence and the extent of violence in their lives. Parents and school personnel also increased their knowledge and skills in violence prevention and enhanced their ability to provide effective violence prevention. Some of the recommendations that are made include the development of a health education initiative as part of a national campaign for violence prevention. (Contains 65 references and extensive appendices containing sample letters, surveys, and questionnaires.) (RJM)

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ED 413 551

Improving the Behavior of Seventh- and Eighth-Grade, Severely At-Risk Students Through the Development of a Middle School Violence Prevention Program

by

Jody S. Persons

Cluster 63

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A Practicum I Report Presented to the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

1994

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

This practicum took place as described.

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This practicum report was submitted by Jody S. Persons under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova Southeastern University.

2-15-96
Date of Final Approval of Report

Roberta Silfen
Roberta Silfen, Ed.D., Advisor

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To all my friends, colleagues, and loved ones, may we all live in and have our children grow up in a safe, peaceful, and nonviolent society.

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ABSTRACT

Improving the Behavior of Seventh- and Eighth-Grade, Severely At-Risk Students Through the Development of a Middle School Violence Prevention Program. Persons, Jody S., 1995: Practicum I Report, Nova Southeastern University, Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies. School Social Worker/Middle School Education/Group Counseling/Violence Prevention/Conflict Resolution/Parent Education/School Personnel Training.

This practicum was designed to improve the behavior of seventh- and eighth-grade, severely at-risk students through a 12-week middle school violence prevention program which utilized a multisensory approach in conjunction with group counseling. The practicum included an educational component for parents and school personnel.

The writer developed and administered needs assessments, pre- and posttest questionnaires, and workshop evaluation surveys; collated score results; compared disciplinary records; coordinated antiviolence community speakers and a field project to the youth correctional center; received funding from three grants; developed a violence prevention resource directory; interviewed all participants; observed student behavior; reviewed all journal entries; coordinated middle school activities for "Increase the Peace Week" including the videotaping of components of the practicum for a local cable television program; became a member of the mayor's committee against crime; and became known for expertise in decreasing the violent behavior of adolescents.

The outcome of the practicum revealed that involving students in a collaborative program with parents and school personnel resulted in an overall decrease in their violence-oriented behavior. Data showed that students increased their understanding of violence and the extent of violence in their lives as well as enhanced their knowledge of community resources and violence prevention alternatives. The data from the practicum also revealed that parents and school personnel increased their understanding of violence; enhanced their ability to provide effective violence prevention; and increased their knowledge of community resources.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Community

The inner city public middle school was located in a blue collar working class city 20 miles south of a large metropolis. Over the past 15 years, the population had steadily grown to approximately 50,000 people as families relocated from the metropolitan city to the suburban city where there were more job opportunities, more available housing, and less violence. The town was founded in 1639 and incorporated into a city in 1864. It was famous in the past for its numerous jewelry mills and silver foundries. In fact, the city was called "The Silver City," and for many years was the most prosperous silver and jewelry city in the northeastern region. Today, unfortunately, the majority of mills and foundries that were once thriving have closed or relocated, and industrial parks and high technology industry have replaced them. Therefore, employment opportunities were not as abundant. The city's unemployment rate as of December 1994 was 5.5, slightly above the state rate.

The community was estimated at 48,000 square miles. It

was divided into four geographical areas; three were located around the center of the city, and one was located on the outskirts of the city in a suburban country setting. The core of the city was the most densely populated and was heavy with business and housing developments. Four major subsidized neighborhood projects in this area had the highest rate of violent crime in the city. The country area on the outskirts of the city had a sparse population but it was also steadily growing. Consequently, there had been many condominium developments, new houses, and school additions built in the last 15 years throughout the city to accommodate the increasing population of families. The city had 16 schools which served approximately 7,000 students. There was one high school, four middle schools, and 11 elementary schools. The school department had an above average number of special needs and ethnic students including a preschool and Head Start program.

The community was diverse with hispanics, blacks, and Cape Verdians which is a mixed race of black and Portuguese from the islands west of Africa. The most recent city ethnic census indicated that the minority population are 6%, with 2% blacks, 2% hispanics, less than .5% Asians, and 2% other races. Ninety-five percent of the population was predemoninately nonblack other than hispanic, a term used in the city census to include whites, whites of hispanic origin, and Cape Verdians. The most recent city census

revealed poverty and family status statistics that related to the rate of violent crime among middle school aged adolescents. The poverty census indicated that 7% of the households of adolescents were below poverty level and the family status census indicated that 34% of the adolescents of the same age group were in single parent homes.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

The writer's work setting was the middle school. The writer was a school social worker (also referred to in the school system as a school adjustment counselor) who serviced two middle schools, one in the inner core of the city and the other in the suburban area of the city. The writer implemented the practicum at the inner city middle school.

The middle school consisted of approximately 600 students grades 5 to 8. The enrollment had increased from 512 to 602 students in the last 3 years, an increase of 18%. The middle school students were from diverse ethnic racial and socioeconomic backgrounds. The middle school population had a higher concentration of minority families, of families living below the poverty level, and single parent families than the city census. The most recent middle school ethnic and socioeconomic census indicated that the minority population is 11% with 7% blacks, 4% hispanics, less than .5% Asians, and less than .5% other races. Eighty-nine percent of the population was predominately nonblack other

than hispanic. The poverty rate of the middle school students was 25%; the percent of students in single parent homes was approximately 42%. The inner city middle school serviced 3 out of 4 of the violence-ridden neighborhood projects.

The writer's work setting was primarily within the special needs department of the school system. The writer serviced a special needs substantially separate program at the middle school level for seventh and eighth-grade, severe at-risk students. The program serviced throughout the year between 15 to 20 severe at-risk adolescents ages ranging from 12 to 14.

The writer completed the practicum with the 18 students from the severe at-risk program. Eight of these students were later randomly chosen and participated in the practicum implementation group. Although the severe at-risk students were small in numbers and comprised only 4% of the middle school population, they were responsible for the majority of discipline problems and violence-related incidents in the middle school. Twenty-four percent of the middle school's disciplinary referrals in the school year 1993-1994 were attributed to their behavior.

Students were referred to the specialized severe at-risk program from all four middle schools. They were referred to the program by either their teacher, social worker, psychologist, school administrator, or parent

because of severe behavioral problems. After a thorough psychoeducational evaluation, completed psychosocial assessments, and team meetings, the students were either recommended or not for placement in the severe at-risk program based on their aggressive behavior and propensity for violence. If found appropriate for the program, the students were removed from the mainstream or other special needs programs and transferred to one of the writer's middle schools depending on where there was an opening.

Results from completed psychological and psychiatric evaluations indicated that the majority of the severe at-risk students in the program fell within the primary behavior diagnoses of conduct disorder, unsocialized aggressive behavior, and defiant oppositional disorder as identified in the most recent Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (American Psychiatric Association, 1994). All of the students typically exhibited one or more of the following behaviors: deficient social skills, antisocial behaviors, minimal impulse control, and physical, verbal and sexual aggression. The majority of the students also lacked the ability to anticipate the future consequences of their actions, and they had poor perceptions of what was right and wrong. They had strong resistance to authority, and they demonstrated a propensity for violence. Consequently, the majority of the students were court involved and under the jurisdiction of the Department of

Social Services (DSS) and/or the Department of Youth and Correction Services (DYS) as a result of violent behavior.

The academic component of the program used individual and small group instruction with a multisensory approach. Students were taught on their adjusted grade level. The behavioral component of the program superseded the academic component. This component of the program utilized consistent behavior management. It had a strong focus on students' accepting responsibility for their behavior and acquiring good decision making skills.

The writer had worked in the social work field for approximately 20 years and had worked as a school social worker in the severe at-risk program in the middle schools for the past 9 years. As the middle school social worker, the writer acted as the coordinator of the multidisciplinary educational team (CET) that worked with the severe at-risk students. The CET included the behavioral specialist, the school psychologist, the principal, the guidance counselor, the ancillary specialists such as speech therapy, occupational or physical therapy, the community professionals such as DSS, DYS, students' psychiatrists and therapists, and most importantly the parents.

As an instrumental part of the team, the social worker's role and services varied. Most importantly, the writer provided direct counseling and social work intervention to the severe at-risk students and their

families. The writer was very involved with the behaviors and psychosocial problems of the students and parents at both school and home. The writer served as the school-home-community linkage which involved services now conceptualized by Clark and Hare (1992) as case management activities.

The writer provided individual and group counseling and crisis intervention for students and their families both in school and on an outreach basis. Because the family was the constant in the students' lives, while services and personnel fluctuated, parents were respected as the most significant members of the team; therefore, positive working relationships were established. The family-centered philosophy was the basis for the writer's intervention and the writer's style and approach was family and team oriented.

Through home visits, interviews, and observations, the writer completed psychosocial assessments which evaluated the students' living conditions and patterns of parent-child interaction. In addition, the writer functioned as an advocate, a referral source for the students and parents, and a liaison with community service providers. As the link between the school, home, and community, the writer also provided consultation to middle school personnel in dealing with severe at-risk behavior students, received in-school disciplinary referrals for students, referred them to the juvenile court system, and often accompanied the students

and parents to juvenile court hearings. Lastly, the writer strived to make the school, parent, and community sensitive to the unique problems of severe at-risk students because there were many influences from the environment that significantly affected their propensity for violence.

The writer's past experience working with troubled clients and their families included medical social work, clinical social work, outpatient counseling, geriatric social work, social work consultation, residential counseling, drug and alcohol counseling, college internship supervision, agency acting director, and juvenile offender counselor. In addition, the writer was a state and nationally certified and licensed social worker, a state certified school adjustment counselor, a certified drug and alcohol abuse counselor, a Nova Southeastern University doctoral student, and a local business owner.

Through working with troubled youth, the writer had developed a strong commitment to making a difference in decreasing youth violence in today's society. The writer was an active member of the mayor's violence prevention committee, a member of the school department's committee to review violence prevention strategies, and a panel member on a public speaking forum in response to the television documentary Kids Killing Kids in 1994. The writer openly advocated for violence prevention programs and the need for stricter gun control.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

In modern society more violent crimes have been committed by adolescents than ever before. Youth violence, which had reached epidemic proportions, was not just restricted to certain ethnic and socioeconomic groups, urban areas, or criminals; it was affecting all groups and all age levels. It surrounded Americans in homes, schools, communities, and the mass media. There were no longer geographical safe havens--not in the suburbs nor in rural America. Neighborhoods, homes, schools, business places, and even places of worship no longer felt safe. This climate of fear and hopelessness can ruin the lives and dreams of youth.

Deborah Prothrow-Stith, former MA Commissioner of Public Health and current assistant dean at the Harvard School of Public Health was a nationally-recognized expert on teen violence and a leader of the national movement to prevent adolescent violence. She concluded that young people frequently do not understand that they are at high risk of becoming victims of violence themselves (Prothrow-

Stith, 1987). In Deadly Consequences, she noted that many young lives had been lost already and we as a society must begin to protect them (Prothrow-Stith, 1991a). In this practicum, violence was defined as aggression, "an act that injures or irritates another person" (Eron, 1987, p. 435). Eron, who completed extensive research in child aggression, further defined that aggression excluded self-hurt, but included a variety of behaviors which included both hitting and hurting behaviors, injury to or theft of property, whether or not these behaviors were reinforced from the victim or target person. Prothrow-Stith (1991a), who shared Eron's view of aggression, defined aggression as an act that is "physically or verbally hurting other people" (p. 5). She further pointed out her belief that aggression was a learned behavior and one that can be unlearned.

At the present time, the U.S. has had more violent crime than any other industrialized nation, and the American popular culture has been more violent than that of other countries. In 1990, the British magazine, The Economist, exploring the reasons behind America's high crime and homicide rate, reported the crime rate in the U.S. as being five times higher than that of western Europe (Brown, 1992). Prothrow-Stith (1991a) studied the most recent homicide rates for young men in developed nations and placed the overall U.S. homicide rate between 4 and 73 times higher than the rate for young males in any other industrialized nation.

To fully appreciate the magnitude of the problem, it took an overview of the extent of youth violence on a national, state, and local level. On a national level, homicide was the leading cause of death among today's youth between the ages of 10 and 14, secondary only to automobile accidents. Among black males, homicide was the leading cause of death. In the U.S. over the last 10 years, 50,000 children died violently, more than the casualties of the Vietnam War. In 1991 alone, 5,261 children and teenagers died as a result of homicidal violence. Every day 30 children were killed by violence (Merina, 1994). In addition, a survey conducted by the Pediatric Trauma Registry at Tuft's Medical Center in Boston showed that over the past 4 years the number of children under the age of 19 needing care for gunshot wounds had doubled (Combs, 1994). Numerous other studies completed by national centers of research statistics (see Appendix A) also supported the rise in youth violence and were instrumental in raising consciousness of the problem.

On a state level, violent crime remained a major concern of the public. Juvenile violent crime had steadily increased during the 15 years following 1956 (Miller, 1991). Miller, former head of the MA youth correctional system, estimated of the 20,000 persons arrested in MA for murder and manslaughter, 2,000 were juveniles (1991).

On a local level, violent crimes were steadily

increasing as families fled metropolitan areas. This city's juvenile court system was increasingly burdened with violence-related crimes. In fact, although the most recent state statistics indicated that the nearby metropolitan city's youth crime rate had decreased by 8% for the first half of the year 1994, which was that city's lowest rate since 1973, the juvenile court crime cases in the writer's city had more than doubled in the past 7 years.

Eight years ago the state director of the department of youth services contacted this writer to stress concerns about the increasing population of troubled youth and their families relocating from the metropolitan city to the writer's city. He predicted that the writer's city would see a steady increase in the rise of violence among the youth population in the next 10 years (G. O'Shea, personal communication, Spring, 1987).

As predicted the problem of youth violence had become such an issue in the city that 3 years ago the city council organized a mayor's violence prevention committee in conjunction with community programs and the school department to address the increase in youth violence and develop solutions. The writer was an active member of the committee and advocated violence prevention programs being implemented in the middle schools. The writer outlined the practicum to the committee in the spring of 1995, and very interested in the results, they supported the concept.

Throughout the past years, the writer has had numerous discussions on youth crime with the city's leaders, state youth advocacy groups, school administrators, police officials, youth correctional staff, and court officials including the juvenile court magistrate and judge. All concurred that the increase in the city's youth crime was a major problem. This trend among today's youth was predicted to continue unless youth gained the skills to resolve their problems without violence.

Paul Barrett (1991) gave excellent insight to youth violence when he discussed how youth had developed "an impersonal and callous attitude toward human life and had resorted to violence to settle their differences" (p. 17). The writer saw this all too frequently when counseling middle school seventh and eighth-grade students from the severe at-risk program. The writer found that the 18 severe at-risk students who exhibited violence-oriented behavior were involved in violent incidents in either home, school or the community, and were seldom distressed with the violence in their lives or wanted to change their lifestyle.

One reason for this was that the students lacked the ability to recognize the extent of violence in their lives. The majority of the students had grown up in a violent environment and were obviously at greater risk of accepting violence as a normal pattern of life inside and outside the family. They learned to build strong defense mechanisms to

cope and survive.

During an interview with one of the 8th grade, severe at-risk girls in the classroom, the writer asked how she felt about the violence in her life. She commented that violence was just normal because she had lived with it all her life. "I've lived all my life in the projects," she continued, "and that's why I'm used to it." Furthermore, although she lived in the project with the highest juvenile crime rate in the city (school officer, personal communication, March 8, 1995), and came from a family that had a lengthy history of violence both domestic and criminal, she completed a needs assessment survey responding that she felt there was no violence in her life or in the lives of the people she cared about.

The writer had worked with the 18 students and families in the severe at-risk program since the students began the program approximately 1-2 years ago. Consequently, the writer had access to school records and evaluations, disciplinary records, and authorization to review court documents and confer with community services. The writer had also developed a trusting relationship with the students and families; therefore, completing questionnaires and needs assessments and conducting interviews with students, parents, school personnel, and community professionals during school or during home visits was feasible.

In retrospect, during the past 9 years that the writer

had counseled the severe at-risk students and their families, problems that the writer addressed and focused on in the mid 1980's to 1990's were not today's issues of weapons, guns, drug dealing, gangs, physical and sexual assault, verbal threats, fire setting, extortion, and theft.

Review of school records, including all previous testing and assessments, and on-going intervention with the 18 students, parents, and school personnel, revealed the following facts: all students had been either physically, verbally, or sexually aggressive; all students had shown socially inappropriate behavior in school; all students had been unable to avoid conflicts; and 15 of the 18 students had had alcohol or drug involvement.

In addition, through reviewing specifically the students' psychological evaluations and psychosocial assessments, and through the writer's continued intervention with students, parents, and school personnel, it was apparent that the students' violent behavior negatively affected their physical, social, and emotional well-being. All students had been injured from physical assaults at least one time or more; all students had difficulty establishing positive and appropriate social relationships at home and at school; all students had difficulty communicating their feelings; all students had poor coping skills; all students had low self-esteem; and 16 of the 18 students suffered from underlying depression. Interviews

and needs assessments completed with parents and school personnel also indicated that parents lacked the ability to guide their children away from violence and that school personnel lacked the skills and confidence to help students decrease their violent behavior. Certainly, children needed to avoid violence to keep their future physical and mental health well. This was supported by Lenore Terr in her book, Too Scared to Cry. Terr (1990), a well-known psychiatrist who worked extensively with post traumatic stress children, examined many ways that violent crime had psychologically traumatized children. She felt strongly that their emotional well-being had been jeopardized for life.

Problem Documentation

The writer had collected evidence from students, parents, school personnel, and community professionals to prove that seventh and eighth-grade, severe at-risk students demonstrated violence-oriented behavior.

The first actual evidence came from reviewing students' school disciplinary records. When students were suspended, the number of days and the behavior precipitating their suspensions were documented monthly. Because 24% of the middle school's suspensions were from the severe at-risk students, the writer received a copy of the monthly report. During the school year 1993-1994, out of 87 in-school incidents requiring suspension of the 18 severe at-risk

students, 73 were for violence-oriented behavior. In examining the documentation of the suspensions, the writer concluded that 27 incidents were for physical aggression and fighting; 25 incidents were for verbal aggression; 15 incidents were for inappropriate sexual aggression, both physical and verbal; six incidents were for miscellaneous behavior that was violence directed in nature; and 14 incidents were for gross disrespect toward staff.

The second actual evidence documenting the problem of the severe at-risk students was the number of students referred to juvenile court. In the school year 1993-1994, 12 of the 18 severe at-risk students were referred to juvenile court for "repeated school offenses" due to the frequency and severity of their school behavior. "Child in Need of Services" (CHINS) petitions initiated by the middle school administration based on the students' behavior were referred to juvenile court through the school officer. The school officer, students, parents, probation officer, and the writer attended court proceedings. It was the responsibility of the writer to keep the juvenile magistrate and judge updated with an ongoing assessment of the students' school behavior.

Additional evidence documenting the problem was the number of the severe at-risk students charged in juvenile court for incidents occurring at either school, home, or the community. In the school year 1993-1994, 7 of the 18 severe

at-risk students were referred to juvenile court for various violent criminal offenses. In two incidents at school, the police pressed criminal charges; one involved a student possessing a knife and another a student physically out of control disrupting the principal's office. Other criminal charges included breaking and entering, spray painting neighborhood homes, stealing cars, driving without a license, possessing a handgun, violating civil rights, assaulting with a dangerous weapon, having disorderly conduct, drinking under the age, and assaulting a police officer.

The supervisor of probation officers at juvenile court concluded that the number of juvenile cases in the city had increased dramatically and youth violence was a major problem in the juvenile court judicial system, so much that an additional probation officer had to be hired (probation supervisor, personal communication, December 16, 1994). The city's annual juvenile probation report through the city commissioner documented on a city level that approximately 1300 juvenile cases were brought to court in 1994. This was more than double of 7 years ago.

The fourth actual evidence was needs assessments which documented the students' violence as a problem for students, parents, and school personnel. The administration of the needs assessment was an important method in determining needs for programs, individual service, and training of

staff. Needs assessments were conducted prior to development of the practicum to determine students', parents', and school personnel's primary concerns about violence oriented behavior. Meyer and Eichinger (1987) suggested that "items included in needs assessments should be statements of the knowledge, skills, and/or competencies judged to represent 'most promising educational practices'" (p. 315). The needs assessments completed by students, parents, school personnel, and community professionals prior to the practicum implementation surveyed 5 issues of violence: (a) the understanding of what violence is, (b) the recognition of the extent of violence in the lives of students and their parents, (c) the causes and factors attributing to violence, (d) the prevention and alternatives, and (e) the knowledge of available community resources in school, home, and the community.

Student needs assessments were completed by 18 of the severe at-risk students (see Appendix B). The response to the survey documented that students identified three issues of violence in their lives: what causes violence, how to stop violence, and where to get help. These students prioritized stopping the use of weapons and guns; decreasing the arguing, fighting, and killing; and understanding the causes of violence as the three issues they would have liked to learn most about. They prioritized school, counseling, and the community as the three places they could have gotten

the most help to do so.

The parent needs assessments were completed by 12 parents (see Appendix C). They were completed in conjunction with an interview with the writer. The responses to the survey documented that the majority of parents felt violence was a problem at school and at home. They agreed that they didn't receive enough support to stop violence, they didn't understand the alternatives to violence, and they were not aware of community services. The parents prioritized the recognition of warning signals of violence in their children, the prevention of their children becoming violent, and the television and music industry encouraging violence as the three issues they needed most assistance with.

The school personnel needs assessments (see Appendix D) were completed by 28 school staff members and 8 community professionals. School personnel and professionals selected issues and problems which were relevant to their own experiences with the students. A letter describing the needs assessments (see Appendix E) was distributed with the survey. Responses to the survey documented that the majority of school personnel felt violence was a problem for middle school students and their parents, that school personnel didn't receive enough intervention to prevent violence, and that they didn't have enough skills to recognize, deal with, and help the students prevent violence. The school personnel prioritized conflict

resolution and mediation, the schools role in preventing violence, and the lack of knowledge of community resources as three issues they needed most assistance with.

The fifth actual evidence to document the problem of violence-oriented behavior were interviews completed with 18 of the students, 12 parents, eight school personnel, and three community professionals. The interviews focused on the extent of the problem of youth violence, the understanding of the symptoms, the societal issues that encourage violence, and the alternatives to youth violence. Statistics compiled from these interviews documented that all 18 students, all 12 of the parents, and all school and community professionals felt violence was a major issue for middle school students.

Additional evidence documenting the problem was an interview with a behavioral special needs educator (see Appendix F) who had worked with severe at-risk seventh and eighth-grade adolescents for the past 10 years at the middle school. Her thoughts about the students and their violence-oriented behaviors clearly documented the extent of the problem among today's youth.

A final documentation of the problem came from students' previous psychological testing, psychosocial assessments, and behavioral testing of the 18 severe at-risk students. Although each student was not previously tested using the same assessment tools, a review of the test

results indicated that all the severe at-risk students have a propensity for violence.

A personal interview with a school psychologist who had worked in the field of severe at-risk students for the past 20 years on the elementary and middle school level documented how psychological testing, specifically projective testing, could reveal underlying themes of violence in students. She stated:

> Projective testing can reveal many personality strengths with severe at-risk students. The beginning capacity for internalized processes can reveal how at-risk children, who have a history of violence in their lives, view their environment as aggressive, destructive, unpredictable, and unsafe. Projective testing can reveal internalized trauma related to a heightened sense of vigilance and self protection. Children's aggression could appear to be both a learned response to their environment and an attempt to defend themselves from perceived external threats. (J. D. Sunderland, personal communication, January 18, 1995)

Causative Analysis

There were four critical factors that the writer proposed which contributed to severe at-risk students' violence-oriented behavior. They were the students' psychosocial problems, the parents' inability to cope with

violence, the school personnel's lack of skills to deal with the violent students, and society's many elements that encourage youth violence.

The first major factor that inhibited students from having effective problem-solving skills was students' many psychosocial problems that had been confirmed by the writer's intervention with students and parents, the psychoeducational assessments, and the research and literature on the causes of youth violence. The following psychosocial problems were apparent: students had ineffective interpersonal communication skills; students could not control their anger; students utilized aggressive behavior rather than assertive verbal interaction; students had low self-esteem; students felt alone, unsafe, and scared; and students had inappropriate parental modeling of problem-solving skills. In fact, parents who were unable to cope with violence was another critical factor that the writer proposed aggravated the violence-oriented behavior of the severe at-risk students.

This factor, indicated through parent interviews and completed parent needs assessments as well as research and literature, indicated that parents failed to recognize the extent of violence in their lives and the family origins of violence; parents lacked an understanding of the risk factors of violence, and they had difficulty dealing with their own anger and that of their children. Moreover,

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parents lacked the knowledge of alternatives to violence and lacked the important information of available community resources. One of the school counselors wrote an insightful comment in one needs assessment about parenting:

> The effects of parenting skills, or lack thereof on violence prone children needs to be addressed. Is it lack of nurturing? Parents need to be held more accountable--especially if it's determined that they set the scene for violence and anger. Many parents do not really know or understand the impact of violence on their children and many do not want to take the time to discipline. (counselor, January 18, 1995)

The third factor that contributed to the violence-oriented behavior of the severe at-risk students was that school personnel were not helpful in preventing student violence because the majority of middle school personnel were not skilled in dealing with violence-oriented students. Fifteen out of 28 school personnel felt that teachers and administration should have been trained and reeducated about what to do when violence occurs in school. Through personnel interviews and completed school personnel needs assessments, the writer found that the additional following problems were also apparent: most personnel did not have an understanding of what violence is and did not recognize it in students' behavior; most personnel did not have an

understanding of the risk factors of violence; most personnel lacked the viable skills and support to deal with the students and parents; and most personnel did not have knowledge of community resources.

Finally, the writer proposed that many elements of society contributed to and encouraged youth violence. Literature on youth violence and interviews with students, parents, school personnel, and community professionals identified substance abuse, weak gun control, media and entertainment violence, the family unit, and socioeconomic issues as the major elements.

Alcohol and drug abuse was a major cause of youth violence. During interviews, students, parents, school personnel, and community professionals agreed that drug-related crimes were increasing among teenagers. Although many of the severe at-risk students were not seriously involved with drugs themselves, the needs assessments indicated that the majority had family and friends who were. All the severe at-risk students who lived in the projects indicated to the writer that they saw drug deals going on almost every day and that the dealers almost always carried guns. Upon interviewing a parent on what she saw the causes of teen violence as being, she replied that without a doubt drugs were the number one cause in the project. Crime experts believed that there were several reasons for the rise in violent crime among youth, but most specifically

targeted drugs. "When drug sellers and drug users move into neighborhoods" said experts, "chances are that violent crime will move in too" ("Violent Crime," 1991. p. 2). Inciardi (1990), an expert in the field of drug abuse within the adolescent population, had written several studies on the effects of drug abuse, specifically cocaine and crack, and youth violence. As the director of the division of criminal justice at the University of Delaware and editor of the 1991 book The Drug Legalization Debate, he conducted an excellent study which focused on the various types of youth violence associated with crack cocaine use and distribution in Florida. Inciaidi concluded that "there is a clear relationship between a youth's proximity to the crack market and his or her overall position in the street worlds of drug use and crime, including violent crime" (p. 101).

Poor gun control, another element in society, enabled adolescents to seek weapons to solve their problems and commit crimes. In 1994 the writer conducted a survey with the eighth-grade, severe at-risk students based on the "Youth Risk Behavior Survey" by the Center of Disease Control (Combs, 1994). Students were asked if they had carried guns during the last 30 days. Although the results were predictable, they were nonetheless frightening. Approximately 50% of the students reported they had carried guns, 75% had been in the presence of others who had carried guns, and 30% had family who had guns at home.

Although numerous factors should be considered in society's violence profile, many professionals felt firearms were the number one reason for America's high crime and homicide rate among today's youth. Treaster and Tabor (1992), reporters for the New York Times, writing about the increase in teenagers using guns, felt it is one of the major contributors to teen violence. Treaster and Tabor's research concluded that "the number of young people arming themselves and dying is reaching epidemic proportion" and that "many young people have been caught up in the vicious circle of packing weapons" (p. 33).

In interviews with the eight students who were randomly chosen to participate in the practicum implementation, all eight students reported some involvement with guns. One student relayed he had seen someone get shot for drugs; another said his cousin had been shot 12 times for an argument over a girl; another said he'd held a 45, a 32, and was always finding bullet shells in the projects; and one student relayed he saw a kid get shot with an uzi in a drive by shooting because of gang rivalry between the blacks and Puerto Ricans. As Treaster and Tabor (1992) stated, "A 13- or 14-year old holding an uzi submachine gun has no understanding of his own mortality let alone your mortality" (p. 35).

Media and entertainment violence desensitized viewers especially children to the reality of violence and increased

their propensity to violence. Some professionals argued that viewing violence in the media would not directly result in imitating behavior. On the other hand, it was very probable that the violence portrayed contributed to the desensitization of an entire population of people who came to view violence as more normal than not. In fact it was viewed not only as normal but as entertaining.

A newsletter, written to serve elementary and middle school principals, estimated that the average child had watched 8,000 murders and 100,000 acts of violence on television alone--including children's programs--by the beginning of middle school ("How Parents," 1995). In a recent poll done for the corporation for Public Broadcasting, 8 out of 10 adults said television as a whole was too violent (Merina, March, 1994) yet children under 12 still continued to watch TV at least 4 hours of every day. The writer felt strongly that the severe at-risk students retained much of what they saw on TV and that they formed ideas and attitudes about life and the world from what they saw on television. They interpreted what they saw on TV differently than adults and they lacked the skills to distinguish fiction from fact. Through interviews with the students, parents, school personnel, and community professionals and through reviewing previous assessments, it was apparent that all 18 of the severe at-risk students were not just mesmerized by media violence but stimulated.

During initial assessments of the students, the writer gained insight into the students' profile by discussing the students' interests including their favorite movies, TV programs, and games. In the assessments, 15 out of 18 severe at-risk students selected programs that were violent oriented or depicted sex as violence (see Appendix G). One community professional reported that she felt the media had the strongest influence on the at-risk teenagers especially those students she worked with who have a dysfunctional family.

In conjunction with the mass media, the entertainment industry, specifically video games, arcades, and music, was another major contributor to the violence-oriented behavior of severe at-risk students. All of the eight students owned at least two or more violent video games or music tapes. This year, the severe at-risk teacher had confiscated more than six inappropriate violent or sexual tapes. The writer had addressed the implications of the violent themes with the students, but they denied that music adversely affected them.

Two of the students' favorite rap lyricists to date were Snoop Doggy Dogg, a black rap lyricist whose tape "Doggystyle" had a cover depicting human figures sodomizing dogs, and Tupac Shakur, a black rapper of violence and an actor who earned a black award nomination for his performance in an extremely violent but popular adolescent

film, Poetic Justice. "Doggystyle" hit the top charts in 1993, the same week Snoop Doggy Dogg was indicted for murder. Shakur, who was arrested 3 weeks earlier for allegedly shooting two police officers after a traffic argument, was additionally indicted for sexual assult. The students idolized both rappers and relayed they felt for their "injustice." One parent who discussed the effects of the entertainment world during the interview with the writer showed insight, "We need to reeducate our children who their heroes are and who they listen to. They're living in the movie New Jack City, where you get shot and then you get up and you're fine; they need new role models." (parent, personal communication, February 16, 1995). Most problem students lacked role models to counteract negative images found in the media.

The dysfunctional family was an additional element of society contributing to the students' violence-oriented behavior. Zinmeister (1990) a researcher of the correlation between youth violence and the family unit documented that the roots of the problem of youth violence was the family breakdown. Zinmeister quoted statistics indicating that "60% of all children born today will spend at least some time in a single parent household before reaching age 18; that the Bureau of Justice statistics reported not long ago that 70% of the juveniles in state reform institutions grew up in single-parent or no-parent families; and that of a

recent study of 72 adolescent murders, it was found three quarters came from single-parent homes" (p. 68).

Although the city's family status census indicated that 34% of the adolescents were in single-parent homes, the statistics for the severe at-risk students were higher. The students' social histories revealed that 14 out of 18 of the students were from single parent homes, all living with a female parent except one. The absence of fathers and not having positive male role models made it very stressful for the mothers of the adolescents. The single-parent father also felt it was very stressful for his daughters not to have a female role model in the house as well. As Zinsmeister (1990) saw in his studies, many of the severe at-risk students' male role models were unemployed, drug dealers, seen as having "power" and equipped with "guns and gold," leaders of gangs, or abusive boyfriends of their mothers.

The final elements in society that encouraged violence, as indicated by the literature, interviews, and social histories, are low income housing, poverty, race, and other social problems such as transportation and unemployment. Although the city's poverty status indicated that 7% of adolescent households were below poverty level, the statistics of the severe at-risk students were higher indicating that 13 out of 18 students' families were below poverty level. In addition, social histories, revealed that

11 out of 18 students lived in low income housing, 5 out of 18 students were from minority families, 11 out of 18 students' families had transportation problems, and 12 out of 18 students' families suffered from unemployment.

The combination of these social problems encouraged violence, escalated physical, sexual, and emotional child abuse, and other domestic violence in the home. This was based on the research and literature and the writer's professional experience with the severe at-risk students. When children grew up as witnesses to aggression in the family, they often concluded that violence was an acceptable part of family and social life. The trauma of child abuse and domestic violence was not just physical, but it was the continued psychological trauma that prevented these children from being emotionally healthy and able to handle the daily stress of life.

One DSS social worker gave the opinion that it was very difficult for the severe at-risk families she worked with to move out from poverty, low income housing, and violence-ridden projects. She stated, "There is simply not enough subsidized housing available; the majority of parents are either unskilled, untrained or unmotivated for employment, and with the recent state cutbacks in the welfare system, services such as transportation and rehabilitation training are minimal" (DSS social worker, personal communication, February 1, 1995).

As Murphy (1992) documented and the writer agreed, there was no single cause that could be found for youth violence. Murphy, a writer for the Los Angeles Times believed that "it is a combination of factors that lead some youths to act violently, including child abuse, violence in the home, the neighborhood, the media, and easy access to guns" (p. 60).

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

A review of the literature and research indicated that many professionals were concerned with the problem of youth violence. Social workers, educators, psychologists, doctors, researchers, government officials, law officers, and politicians throughout the U.S. all have documented their concerns about the increasing rate of youth violence. They stressed developmental, social, societal, and familial factors as contributors to the violence-oriented behavior of today's youth.

Developmentally, adolescence was the most difficult stage for children and their parents. It was a transitional period linking children and adulthood and as Hechinger (1993a) supported whenever violent crime happened, the segment of the population most likely to be victimized, most likely to commit violent crimes, and most likely to be arrested were adolescents. In this practicum, the seventh and eighth-grade, severe at-risk students were defined as

early adolescence which Santrock (1993), one of the leading writers and research experts in the field of adolescent studies, corresponded roughly to the middle school or junior high school years and included most pubertal changes. Santrock believed that this developmental stage was increasingly dangerous for students to carry out their risk-taking behavior. A research study that focused on the early adolescent years by Eccles et al. (1993) concluded that adolescent years had the highest arrest rate (10-30%) of any age and an increasing rate of alcohol and drug consumption on a regular basis, along with a significant decline in the personal and positive relationships of youth which produced multiple social and behavioral problems. Gottfredson and Hirschi (1994) documented that the crime rate rose rapidly through early adolescent years and that "adolescence is the most characteristic of the offender relevant to crime" (p. 31), and experts in the field tended to overlook this issue.

Socially, Prothrow-Stith (1987) addressed the issues of youth violence through her violence prevention curriculum based on the premise that students' poor problem-solving skills provoked aggression and conflict. As early as 1980, the Center for Disease Control established the Violence Epidemiology Branch and former Surgeon General Koop in 1984 took the beginning steps in identifying violence as a public health issue. President Clinton (1995) during his State of the Union Address, emphasized that society must take

responsibility for nurturing violence in today's youth. In a sociological study of gang violence, Boyle (1990) found that dysfunctional families, intense poverty, failing school, and few job opportunities were problems society must address if youth were to find hope in their lives. Hechinger (1993a) who addressed the issue of youth violence and the family felt that the major root of the violence crisis began at home and with the disintegration of the family.

The literature and research studies continued to document the problem of middle school severe at-risk students with violent-oriented behavior. Documentation focusing on the severe at-risk adolescents, juvenile offenders, and violence in the school, home, and community were conclusive that it was a prevalent pnenomenon. The severity of the problem was revealed by Santrock (1993) who shared excellent insight into the interrelation of problems and disorders in severe at-risk adolescents. Santrock wrote:

> Very high risk youth have multiple problem behaviors and make up as many as 10% of the adolescents. They include adolescents who have been arrested or have committed serious offenses; have dropped out of school, or are behind their grade level; are users of heavy drugs, drink heavily, regularly use cigarettes, and marijuana; and are sexually active but do not use

> contraception. Many, but not all, of these highest risk youth "do it all." (p. 532)

Santrock continued to relay that the high risk youth included as many as 15% of adolescents who participated in the same behaviors but with slightly lower frequency and less deleterious behaviors (p. 536).

McIntyre (1993), who compiled extensive statistics for his work with youth in correctional settings, estimated that 450,000 youth were confined in today's juvenile detention centers and state training schools; 300,000 were serving time in adult jails; and 84,000 juveniles were in city, county, and state detention centers. The fact that youth were killing more than ever was also documented. Murphy (1992) indicated that the number of juveniles arrested for homicide between 1981 and 1990 increased 60% nationwide far outpacing the 5.2% increase among adults, according to FBI statistics. Since the 1980's Prothrow-Stith (1991a) reported that homicide within the U.S. was growing more frequent, estimating that of the 20,000 Americans who died each year of homicides nearly 60% were young males.

Youth violence and fear continued to be facts of life in many of America's schools. Meek (1992) estimated that nearly 300,000 students a year beginning high school were physically attacked, and 1 out of 5 students carried weapons. In addition to these alarming annual statistics, every hour 2,000 more students were attacked on school

grounds, 900 more teachers threatened, and 40 more assaulted (Merina, 1995). There were approximately 28 million students nationwide that fell into the age group served by middle or junior high school and high schools. Seven million, or 1 out of 4 students who fell into the age group served by middle or junior high school and high schools was considered at high risk of failing in school, engaging in dangerous behaviors, and becoming victims or perpetrators of violence (Hechinger, 1993b).

Violence at home and within the families of the middle school severe at-risk adolescents was also documented in the literature. Craig (1992) documented that 14 out of 100 children between the ages of 13 and 17 experienced family violence. Weinhouse (1990), a writer who specialized in adolescent health topics documented how widespread domestic violence was and how frequently children mimicked the aggressor. A Nova Southeastern University doctoral student, Foreman (1994), documented in her practicum that domestic violence in the homes of middle school children was an increasing problem. She reported that "20 out of 55 middle school students referred to her during the fall of 1992 because of poor academics were students who were exposed to violence between adults in their homes" (p. 5).

The literature and research examined many causes for violence-oriented behavior among severe at-risk students such as developmental, social, societal, and familial.

Werner and Smith's (1992) study followed the developmental history of the lives of Hawaiian men and women and traced the impact of a variety of biological and psychosocial risk factors. Results indicated that the majority of students in the study who had experienced "poor child rearing" and had parents who had been convicted of crimes went on to commit crimes themselves. They concluded that "the intact family unit especially in adolescence was a major protective factor in the lives of youth to not commit crime" (p. 108). Lahey, Pracentini, Russo, and Walker's (1989) research recognized the effects of parental antisocial personality disorders, substance abuse, and criminal behavior on the violence-oriented behavior of youth.

Prothrow-Stith (1991a) excelled in documenting the social causes behind youth violence. She acknowledged drugs, gangs, guns, poverty and "free floating anger" as some of the major causes of youth violence. Prothrow-Stith estimated that "if all children born in America learned how to manage anger and aggression nonviolently, homicide rates would decline by 50%, maybe even 75% (p. 145). Kellerman et al. (1993) associated the increase of homicide crime and youth violence to the use of drugs, history of fights in the home, and the easy access to guns. Combs (1994) also documented the increasing number of youth being injured by guns in their homes due to the availability and easy access of guns. Psychotherapists as Sizer (1994) were also

concerned. He stated, "we will have violence in the schools and streets as long as violence pays; it's all a matter of incentives; for many kids, violence and stealing and drug pushing pay" (p. 1).

The literature continued to document societal issues such as the media, race, poverty, unemployment, and housing to be causes of youth violence. Roberts (1993), who studied the influence of the mass media on adolescent behavior, documented the negative affects the mass media had on adolescent violence and sex. Prothrow-Stith (1991b) in Youth Violence focused on the television as being the most powerful mass medium. Prothrow-Stith concluded four important points in reference to her research on children's overexposure to violence on television: (a) "the leading predicitor of how aggressive a young male would be at 19 turned out to be the violence of the television he preferred at age 8" (p. 73); (b) "following the violent program, the children's play is invariably more aggressive" (p. 74); (c) "children who watch a great deal of violent TV are desensitized to the wrongness of what they see" (p. 75); and (d) "young males growing up in poverty in homes that lack nonviolent male role models are the most vulnerable to television's promoting message" (p. 76).

Werner and Smith (1992) indicated in their study that 75% of the juvenile offenders who had committed violent crimes had grown up in chronic poverty as children. From a

racial perspective, since the turn of the twentieth century, research and studies of violent crime had documented the overrepresentation of blacks in U.S. crime statistics. "Official figures show that the number of blacks arrested for crimes of violence in proportion to the number of whites range from 6:1 to 16:1" (Rushton, 1994, p. 276). Rushton pointed out that the instability and violent crime of the black family had tripled due to high rates of marital conflict, mothers heading the family unit, and numerous illegitimate births. He also acknowledged the genetic documentation of behavior genetics, testosterone, intelligence, brain size, and race origins as causes as well.

Familial issues were the concluding causes of youth violence documented. Zinsmeister's study (1990) identified the breakdown of the two parent household as the primary cause of violence. Kellerman et al. (1994) investigated violence in the home and the inability to solve problems nonviolently leading to gun homicides. Weinhouse (1990) noted that "experts believe that family circumstances are a major determinant of what makes a child 'at-risk'" (p. 41). In conclusion, the literature suggested that there were many factors in society that promoted violence. Educational, family dynamics, and psychosocial development were all issues attributing to the violence-oriented behavior of middle school severe at-risk students.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectations

The following overall goal projected for this practicum was to decrease the violence-oriented behavior of middle school seventh and eighth-grade, severe at-risk students. Approximately eight students, chosen at random from the class of 18 students from the severe at-risk specialized program who were initially identified as having violence-oriented behavior, would participate in the practicum implementation. The goal of the practicum would be achieved by increasing students' understanding of violence, including the causes and effects, and the extent to which violence plays a role in their lives; by decreasing the frequency and the severity of students' violence-oriented behavior; by increasing effective violence prevention approaches; and by increasing their knowledge of available community resources.

In addition, the following goals for parent involvement for this practicum included increasing parents' awareness and knowledge of violence and its causes and effects, increasing parents' recognition of the extent of violence in their own lives and that of their children; increasing their

ability to provide effective violence prevention approaches to use with their children at home; and increasing their knowledge of available community resources.

Lastly, the following goals for the school personnel projected for this practicum included enhancing school personnel's knowledge and awareness of violence and the causes and effects of violence on students and school; increasing their skills to deal with violence-oriented students; and increasing their knowledge of available community resources to help refer students and their parents too. It was the writer's hope that achieving these goals would make a significant difference in violence prevention among the severe at-risk students.

Expected Outcomes

At the end of the practicum implementation, the following three outcomes were projected for this practicum. These projected outcomes would later be measured and evaluated. Popham (1993) maintained this was important because programs should be judged, positively to the extent that they promoted students' mastery of the goals and objectives that the program developer had established prior to the program's initiation.

Outcome 1

This outcome focused on the major goal of the practicum: decreasing students' violence-oriented behavior.

At least 13 out of the overall 18 severe at-risk students, and 5 out of the 8 randomly chosen students would improve their understanding of violence and decrease their tendency to commit violent acts.

Outcome 2

This outcome focused on the parents involved. At least 8 out of 12 parents would improve their understanding of violence and learn effective prevention approaches to use with their children.

Outcome 3

This outcome focused on the school personnel involved. At least 22 out of 28 school personnel would improve their knowledge of violence and learn effective skills to deal with violence-oriented students. In addition, community professionals who chose to join the school personnel training would improve their knowledge and skills.

Measurement of Outcomes

Evaluation and measurement were an important part of the practicum. Research supported the need for planning and conducting program evaluations because they have proven to have been an important tool of policy analysis, program management, and political action (Borg and Gall, 1989). Also, Meyer and Eichinger (1987), who extensively studied program evaluations for special education teachers, supported that the true test of the educational validity of

a program was its impact upon the students. Evaluation of this practicum would especially be important because it was the first violence prevention program being implemented in the writer's school system in comparison to other interventions such as health and peer mediation programs which focused only on certain aspects of violence prevention within the school department and within the mayor's committee for violence prevention. The results would be politically significant.

The evaluation of the projected outcomes of the practicum was based on behavioral data both formal and informal that would be measured. This approach, a goal attainment model, which was judged on how effectively its goals were attained, (Popham, 1993) would use a variety of tools and methods of measurement. Formal methods would include data records of behavior incidents, pretest and posttest questionnaires, practicum evaluation, and a behavioral scale. Informal methods would include clinical interviews, assessments, and observations.

Measurement of Outcome 1

The decrease in the students' violence-oriented behavior was measured by the decrease in the frequency of all 18 students' violence-related incidents requiring suspensions. The writer reviewed the suspension report, and a reduction by 14 out of 73 suspensions for violence-oriented school incidents would demonstrate success. The

severity of the students' violent-oriented behavior would also decrease. The writer would review all of the students' juvenile court referrals and conferred with juvenile probation officers and court officials. A reduction of 3 out of 12 juvenile court referrals for school offenses and 2 out of 7 juvenile court referrals for criminal charges would demonstrate success.

The eight students who would complete the practicum implementation would also complete a brief pretest and posttest questionnaire (see Appendix H) the first and last week of the implementation. The pretest questionnaire, which would measure students' knowledge about the use of violence, would provide a baseline measure of students' understanding. The same posttest questionnaire would allow for a comparison of the change in their knowledge as a result of their exposure to the practicum implementation. The research literature documented that this pretest and posttest model was often used by educators to compare analyses of the merits of different programs and could be varied so that there are two or more different treatment conditions (Popham, 1993). Success would be measured by 5 out of the 8 students showing improvement in the pretest and posttest scores and 5 out of 8 students evaluating the practicum intervention as a positive learning experience.

The student outcome would also be measured by a behavioral scale and checklist. Sattler (1992) supported

that behavioral scales and checklists were used primarily to generate information that is helpful in making classification, training, and intervention decisions. However, they were also helpful in describing clinically relevant dimensions of behavior such as violent behavior and assessment procedures. In addition, Matarazzo (1992) was forseen that adaptive behavioral scales for assessing the level to which a child had acquired real world skills needed in everyday living would be necessary for the assessment of at-risk violence-oriented children, families, and groups. The Portland Problem Behavioral Checklist-Revised (PPBC-R) (1994) would be used to measure the decrease in the violence-oriented behavior of the 8 severe at-risk students who would be completing the implementation.

The PPBC-R was known as an excellent method of measurement to identify and evaluate behaviors for intervention programs for research and program evaluation purposes (Waksman, 1984). It would be completed by the special educator. Areas of students' conduct, anxiety, peer, and personal problems that were closely related to violence would be rated and analyzed before and after the practicum implementation. Testing results that indicated a 15% reduction in percentile scores of aggressive behavior for 5 out of 8 randomly chosen students would demonstrate success.

Additional measurements of the outcome would be

clinical interviews with students, parents, school personnel, community professionals such as DSS, DYS, and court officials. The objective of the clinical assessment interview was to obtain reliable and valid information (Sattler, 1992). Clinical assessment interviews had a definite purpose and the writer would take responsibility for directing the interaction and choosing the content. The writer's purpose was to interview the students and others and compare each students' changes since the practicum implementation. In addition, interviewing parents and staff for feedback added validity to the results of the questionnaires.

The final measurement of the outcomes was reviewing observations. Sattler (1992) recognized the need of using observational methods to study behaviors that have had a high risk frequency and assessing aggressive behavior like that of the severe at-risk students. Observational reports of students' behavior in school, at home and in the community by school personnel, parents, and community professionals would be collected by the writer and used in the evaluation.

Measurement of Outcome 2

The measurement of the parent component would be a pretest and posttest questionnaire (see Appendix I) and a practicum workshop evaluation survey (see Appendix J), completed by parents before and after the parent

implementation. The questionnaire would demonstrate the increase in parents' knowledge and skills of violence prevention and overall evaluation of the parent implementation component. Eight out of 12 parents who showed improvement in pretest and posttest scores and who evaluated the parent implementation as a positive learning experience would demonstrate success. In addition, post interviews would be conducted and feedback from parents would be reviewed by the writer.

Measurement of Outcome 3

The measurement of the school personnel component would also be a pretest and posttest and questionnaire (see Appendix K) and a practicum evaluation survey completed by school personnel before and after the school personnel implementation. The questionnaire would demonstrate the increase in school personnel's knowledge and skills and overall evaluation of the school personnel implementation component. Twenty-two out of 28 school personnel who showed improvement in pretest and posttest scores and who evaluated the school component as a positive learning experience would demonstrate success. In addition, post interviews would be conducted and feedback from school personnel would be reviewed by the writer.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

The issue of the seventh and eighth-grade, severe at-risk students' violence-oriented behavior was a problem that affected all areas of the students' lives and the lives of the people they came in contact with at home, at school, in the community, and in society in general. Consequently, a number of solutions had been recommended by the literature and research. There was extensive documentation that violence prevention and intervention programs were methods that could significantly reduce youth crime. Programs needed to be developed to enhance violence prevention skills and the understanding of violence by students, parents, and school personnel. First and foremost in the support of violence prevention programs for adolescents was Prothrow-Stith. Prothrow-Stith's (1987) nonviolent productive curriculum, Violence Prevention: Curriculum for Adolescents, was designed to help adolescents with anger in productive, nonviolent ways. Her program evaluation results were overwhelmingly positive. Prothrow-Stith stated:

> I believe that a health education initiative ought to be part of a national campaign to reduce interpersonal violence. Such an initiative could use a standardized version of our curriculum, replicated in a variety of high schools across the country. It would involve some teacher training and the production of new audiovisuals. In addition, we would want to measure the longevity of the impact and the impact on behavior. (p. 105)

Former Surgeon General Koop (1991), who supported Prothrow-Stith's views on the problem of youth violence during the 1980's, made a political statement when he declared in 1984 that violence was a public health issue. Since that time, he has continued to advocate that for public health, violence prevention programs (VPPs) need to be developed in schools nationwide. Koop stated "we need to take seriously the obligation of our schools and colleges to deliver to their students a clear, coherent, and consistent public health message; we need to teach youngsters that they must take charge of their health--all of their lives" (p. 290).

The Eisenhower Foundation (1992), an organization dedicated to reducing youth crime and researching ways to implement programs to reduce youth violence, supported, among other needs, a need for specialized programs in public schools that prevented student violence. Programs for

disadvantaged junior and senior high school students based on a 10-year study during the 1980s were researched. Data from the Eisenhower Foundation's studies evaluating violence intervention programs concluded that the programs appeared more enduring and more cost effective than the reactive responses to violence and clearly reduced recidivism considerably more than prison. Hechinger (1992a) also supported VPPs. He discussed a conference held in 1990 funded by the Carnagie Center of New York Educational Development Center whose goal was to identify VPPs for adolescents between the ages of 10 and 15. Hechinger relayed, at the conclusion, participants "urged greater efforts to sell the need for action by focussing on violence as one of the most serious, life threatening, injury-producing dysfunctional forms of problem behavior" (p. 156).

Specialists in the field of youth crime revealed the need for specialized VPPs for adolescents if there was to be a decrease in violence-oriented behavior of today's youth. Gottfredson and Hirschi (1994) believed crime control policies needed to support programs designed to teach self-control, to teach adolescents the long-term consequences of their behavior, to target dysfunctional families, and to remedy their lack of supervision and discipline.

Young (1994) documented that adolescents in treatment presenting unsocialized aggressive behavior and other forms of delinquent behavior could not have positive long-term

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outcomes unless the environment they lived in was modified. Woodruff, Driscoll, and Sterzin (1992) documented that family-centered services and programs which addressed children's needs within the context of their families, schools, and communities, had proven to be effective models when working with children and families who had histories of drug addiction or antisocial and criminal behaviors. Gottfredson and Hirschi (1994) also documented that effective crime control policies must be policies that focused on the interest and activities of teenagers. In addition, they concluded that unsupervised activities of teenagers must be restricted.

Because the problems of the seventh and eighth-grade, severe at-risk students were so complex and specialized, the writer proposed to employ a variety of techniques for teaching students to avoid violence. They would include a multidisplinary team approach, a multisensory teaching style, a group counseling mode, and an effective leadership. First, although the writer would be developing and coordinating the practicum and implementation, the efforts of all the multidisciplinary team members were needed if the practicum implementation was to be successful. The practicum would be colead by the writer and a school psychologist with the assistance of a special educator and various community guest speakers.

Senge (1990) recommended team approach styles as

effective modes of intervention. He felt there was a greater need for teams more than ever before and that the insights and the skills of individuals needed to be shared so they could be transplanted to other individuals and teams. Woodruff, et al. (1992) documented the effectiveness of the transdisciplinary model of service delivery. This multidisciplinary team approach provided a framework within which program team members, the writer, parents, psychologist, educators, and community professionals, could work together, coordinate prevention services, and provide prevention intervention to the students and families from their individual professional expertise. Students needed to model people working together successfully as the VPP team. They needed to see professionals sharing and caring together to solve the problem of youth violence. They needed to recognize that violence was such a major issue that we all needed to work together.

Secondly, a creative "hands on" multisensory teaching style was needed with the severe at-risk students if the students were to be kept focused on learning. Using this approach was an effective way of creating and presenting a school-based VPP. Rief (1993) supported that special education students with attention and behavior problems learnt best through multisensory techniques. In addition, Bos and Vaughn (1988) pointed out various modes and styles of teaching students with learning and behavior problems by

using a creative and modified multisensory learning style.

Another technique that would be used in the implementation was adolescent group counseling. Though group work with the severe at-risk students could be difficult and frustrating for the leader due to behavioral issues, research and the writer's personal experience suggested that the group approach was equally as effective as individual treatment yet far more efficient for treatment of adolescents and violence prevention. Selman (1990), known for his extensive work in the study of adolescent peer support, and an associate, Shultz, concluded that students' social reasoning in cooperation and conflict resolution improved through a peer therapy program. Lane (1989) asserted that group work is a beneficial counseling mode useful in influencing adolescents' behavior especially in building self-esteem. Frey-Angel (1989) had found that the group approach, which focused on changing behaviors and attitudes around anger and abuse, was the most effective treatment of children who had been exposed to violence in their homes. Tutty and Wagar's (1994) study suggested the need for developing groups for children that addressed conflict resolution and safety skills that have been necessary when living in a home where violence had been a problem. Rose (1990) supported using a cognitive-behavioral approach as a major effective form of working with short-term groups, especially when dealing with treatment goals of

better anger control, more constructive parenting skills, and more useful communication skills--all issues pertinent to a VPP.

Finally, adolescents needed sensitive and self-aware group leaders who would relate in a warm and genuine way. The leader needed to be an information giver and educator, a mediator, a safety net, and a role model (Bilides, 1991). Ultimately with good leadership, they would learn from the VPP and acquire enough confidence and understanding to be able to live nonviolently. As Bilides stated, "with sufficient preparation, a love and concern for children, violence awareness and sensitivity, and a good sense of humor, a leader can make this possible (p. 56).

Description of Selected Solution

The literature and research and the writer's personal experience were the basis for the solution proposed: the middle school VPP with a parent and school personnel component. Middle school seventh and eighth-grade, severe at-risk students, parents, and school personnel would have benefited from violence-prevention strategies and improved techniques to deal with violence. This would be accomplished by solution strategies that focused on entertainment and media violence, gun violence, alcohol and drug abuse, poverty, dysfunctional families, anger management, peer mediation, and conflict resolution.

In a school setting, students in a group would be taught violence prevention skills through a violence prevention program which focused on alternatives to violence, specifically anger management, peer mediation, and conflict resolution.

Merina (1995), who studied a high school peer mediation program in Maryland reinforced the rules of a successful peer mediation: "listen carefully to what the other person's saying, restate the problem in your own words, don't interrupt, and agree to solve the problem" (p. 11). She continued to advocate that school curricula must teach mediation plus conflict resolution skills if educators wanted to maintain safer schools. Meek (1992) strongly supported that peer mediation, conflict resolution, and anger management shared the goals of violence prevention and improved human relations.

In a school setting and group mode, parents would be taught to play an active role in assisting their children to resolve problems nonviolently. The practicum solution selected had a parent component of the students' VPP where parents would meet in a group either during school or after school, whichever assured more parent involvement, with the writer and school psychologist. The goals of the parent implementation component would be addressed. Building supportive and respectful relationships with parents was essential if the VPP was to be successful. Kurtz and Barth

(1989) who studied parental involvement and the schools concluded that "working with the family was essential for assisting troubled students to resolve school-related problems and for helping parents maintain a home environment with more resources and fewer threats" (p. 407).

Henderson, Marburger, and Ooms' (1986) study targeted five instrumental principles in enhancing home-school collaboration which were important and needed to be considered when implementing the VPP parent component: an open and friendly environment, two-way communication with parents, school personnel treating parents as collaborators, parents sharing in decision-making, and school personnel recognizing they have responsibility to forge partnerships with all families in school.

There have been many research studies that justified that working with the parents of severe at-risk students was an integral part of any effective program. Werner and Smith's (1992) study indicated delinquent youth who had parents actively involved in their rehabilitation process did not go on to further criminal careers. Henkoff (1992) stressed the need of parents enrolling in programs that would provide intervention to help them be healthy parents and model nonviolent behavior. Woodruff et al. (1992) continued to support the need of services and programs that would empower parents by "the process of equipping families with the knowledge and skills necessary to provide for and

protect their children, to transcend their dependency, and to negotiate with systems that could provide needed support and resources" (p. 108).

Though Frey-Angel (1989) saw the sibling approach as the first step toward ending the abuse cycle, she also supported treating the parents to help stop the violence in their immediate lives and their children's lives by learning new nonviolent relationship patterns, new approaches to anger expression, and new behaviors which they would have modeled once the violence was under control.

In a school setting, personnel would be trained in violence prevention and would increase their skills in dealing with violence-oriented students. The solution selected would be a middle school personnel component of the students' violence prevention program where school personnel would attend an inservice training workshop taught by the writer and school psychologist during early release time. The National School Safety Center's study (cited in Salholz, Kantrowitz, & McCormick, 1992) documented that teacher training programs needed to be developed to assist school personnel in dealing with disruptive students in crisis prevention and resolution. In addition, a training program for school personnel in New York City public schools ("Irushalmi Responds," 1991) proved to be an effective model for the nation in developing specific violence prevention strategies and guidelines to school safety.

An additional justification for the parent component was a study by Meyer and Eichinger (1987). They documented that staff training and development was critical to the provision of quality educational services. They documented needs assessment, proactive inservice training approaches, awareness, knowledge, and skill levels of staff, and evaluation of inservice activities as important procedures and measures that should be used to evaluate ongoing training needs and the effectiveness of any inservice training.

Report of Action Taken

The writer developed, coordinated, and implemented a proactive middle school violence prevention program that involved three components: a student component, parent component, and school personnel component. The program targeted eight seventh and eight-grade, severe at-risk students chosen at random out of a class of 18 students, 12 parents, and 28 school personnel and community professionals and utilized the strategies of group counseling, peer support, team collaboration, multisensory learning, and effective leadership. The writer developed a program that further helped the school system to recognize that violence was a major problem with adolescent students in the middle school and to recognize a need for intervention. The writer's practicum of continued violence prevention

education and intervention with students, parents, and school personnel was planned to decrease the amount of violence among students.

Student Component

The writer developed a student component of the practicum for the eight students who had a history of violence. These students participated in a violence prevention group to develop effective prevention skills. The writer met weekly with the VPP group for 12 weeks. The sessions varied from 1 1/2- to 2 1/2-hour sessions. The implementation was coordinated by the writer, and colead with the school psychologist with the assistance of the special educator.

The writer also met with the entire classroom of the seventh and eighth-grade, severe at-risk students for 15 additional sessions. The writer involved 14 community professionals as guest speakers (see Appendix L). These speakers addressed specific areas of prevention that the students had independently selected and felt impacted their lives. The practicum concluded with a field project to the regional correctional center. Parent permission was obtained (see Appendix M).

During 1 1/2- to 2-hour sessions, the presentations targeted social decision-making and problem-solving skills and met the diverse ethnic needs of the severe at-risk students. Guest speakers were from the white, black,

hispanic, and Bosnian communities. The writer concurred with the results of Clabby and Elias's (1992) research which found that "systems with children who have emotional and behavioral difficulties need to be encouraged to look beyond the confines of their own closed system and consider inviting outside resources to provide assistance" (p. 54).

The field project to the youth correctional facility involved a 2-hour program presentation aimed toward deterring poor behavioral patterns, peer pressures, and all involvement in drug and alcohol abuse that lead to crime. It's goal was to keep youths from following in the inmates footsteps to prison. Lifers openly revealed why they came to prison; what it had done to their lives and their loved ones; and the horrible consequences they were enduring as a result. Throughout all presentations, the students listened to the speakers, gained information, had group discussions, and processed what they had learned about some very significant social and violence prevention issues.

During the practicum, students studied all levels of violence from interpersonal to international and shared their findings with the larger community. Students assisted in constructing a massive bulletin board for the entire school with information on youth violence prevention issues, referrals, and hot line numbers. Each student received a directory of violence prevention resources (see Appendix O) that they were encouraged to share with other students. The

students also assisted the writer in coordinating a middle school violence prevention poster contest, hung over 200 posters throughout the school, and passed out flyers to parents and school personnel for upcoming training programs. The students also advocated for stricter gun control and with the writer's assistance initiated letter writing to Sarah Brady and to local, state, and national officials including President Clinton and Senator Bob Dole (see Appendix N). Because of the minimal knowledge the students had of international violence especially concerning WW II and the Holocaust, parent permission was obtained and the entire classroom watched the movie, Schlinder's List, in response to the students' interest and requests.

In honor of "Increase the Peace Week," tapings of the presentation on racial violence, the poster contest and student winners, and the first staff training workshop were aired by the local cable television station as part of a half hour program on city and school violence prevention events (see Appendix P). In addition, the writer photographed several of the group sessions, community presentations, and poster contest winners with parent permission. The writer shared the photographs with the students and staff and made them into a photo album. Students were thrilled.

Overall, the actions taken by the students throughout the practicum implementation were commendable. As they

became more aware of their violence-oriented behavior, they openly advocated nonviolence to other middle school students. Students discussed the extent of violence in their home, school and community; identified risk factors; and learned, modeled, and reviewed alternatives to violence.

The writer was also involved with the mayor's office and council for violence prevention in the city throughout the year. At each monthly meeting, an updated report of the progress of the VPP practicum was presented to the committee by the writer. The committee took much interest in the VPP and was extremely supportive of the writer and the students.

Because there were no financial resources for the VPP practicum, the writer applied for three "seed grants; two through local and state funding and the third through the Reebok private foundation. The allotments which totaled approximately $750.00 covered three guest presentation fees, transportation for the field project, materials, videos, and refreshments for the students and parents.

By utilizing a "hands on" multisensory approach to violence in combination with multimedia, role playing, brainstorming, handouts, creative drawings, and group activities because students learned best with this creative approach, the student component was developed. The group of eight severe at-risk students participated in the VPP group for 12 weeks.

Prior to implementation, the first procedure the writer completed was to have all 18 students complete the violence prevention needs assessments (see Appendix B). Parents and school personnel completed needs assessment at this time as well.

Prior to the practicum implementation the writer discussed the VPP with the students and parents. Parent permission forms were signed by all parents of the severe at-risk students for participation in the VPP group, the community speaker presentations, the field project, and the video taping for the local cable television. In addition 7 out of 8 parents signed consent forms for the pretesting and posttesting of the PPBC-R. The eighth parent did not want her son tested but agreed to all other activities.

The writer also discussed the practicum implementation with the principal, and director of pupil personnel several times prior to the implementation and received overwhelming support. Thorough outlines of practicum and implementation progress were presented to the superintendent and assistant superintendent by the writer and copies went to all administrators. Feedback was very positive. The writer met with the coleader and special educator many times prior to the practicum and discussed the calendar plan. The special educator was extremely helpful with her creative ideas and expertise in learning styles of the severe at-risk students.

Weeks 1 and 2. During these weeks, the sessions

focused on students identifying what violence was and recognizing the extent of violence in their lives and the lives of the people they cared about.

Week 1, "What is Violence?," covered introducing group members, discussing goals and objectives of the group, getting group input, establishing rapport with one another, completing pretests, distributing materials, and discussing the group rules, specifically appropriate behavior and confidentiality issues. Contracts were completed by each student and by staff leaders (see Appendix Q). A calendar of the VPP sessions (see Appendix R) and community speakers presentations were distributed (see Appendix L). Behavior management goals and objectives were outlined for students and a progress point system for positive appropriate behavior and achievement with reinforcement and awards were charted. Students organized their own binders and materials which would contain all the individual and group activity sheets and information from the VPP sessions. They drew creative violence prevention covers for their binders. The discussion topic of the session focused on students' understanding what violence was. Individual and group activity sheets included students' and staff's own definitions of violence and the different names and kinds of violence found in today's society. At every session refreshments were served and welcomed. At the conclusion of the session, students completed journal entries and were

required to do so at the end of every session.

Week 2, "Recognizing Violence in Our Lives," covered students' recognizing the extent of violence in society and in the students' own lives. A movie, Stop the Violence, was shown depicting violence in the lives of adolescents. Students clearly identified with it. The discussion topic of the session focused on students' identifying and sharing their feelings on the violence in their lives. Individual and group activities included categorizing the different kinds of violence in their lives as physical, sexual, verbal, emotional, and societal violence; reviewing and distributing current research statistics confirming the extent of violence in society; completing a statistical survey on recognizing the extent of violence in the home, school, and community; and then drawing and sharing with the group a violent experience that had affected their lives in the past year. Homework comprised of bringing an article to group the next week on violence. The session ended with "rap up" and students completing journal entries.

Weeks 3, 4, and 5. During these weeks, the sessions focused on identifying, discussing, and exploring risk factors.

Week 3, "What are the Risk Factors of Violence?," covered the overall risk factors in today's society and the students' own lives. Students first read their homework articles to the group, and then, referring to previous

handouts, completed an activity sheet naming the type of violence and risk factor the article discussed. Individual and group activity sheets focused on the risk factors of violence and homicide statistics and the causes of them. The discussion topic of the session focused on students' sharing risk factors of violence in the students' and group leaders' lives. Refreshments were served and journal entries completed.

Week 4, "Exploring More Risk Factors," covered the risk factors of fighting and anger, alcohol and drugs, and weapons, specifically guns. The discussion topic of the session focused on the availability of guns in the home, school, and community; the correlation between guns and homicide; and children and guns. Individual and group activities included completing personal surveys on the presence of guns in their lives and sharing their feelings with the group. Letters to legislators advocating stricter gun control were written and concerns about the availability of guns in local department store expressed. An extra assignment due next session was designated to one of the students. With assistance from the writer, the student contacted the local police department and found out what the current gun purchasing regulations were. In addition department stores that sold guns were surveyed. Upon completion of the sessions, journal entries were finished.

Week 5, "Exploring More Risk Factors," covered the risk

factors of media and entertainment violence, the family unit, gangs, poverty, and race. Students concluded the discussion of gun control and one student reported to the group the findings of his assignment. The discussion of the session again focused mostly on the gun control issue and entertainment violence. Individual and group activities included reviewing popular entertainment and media programs chosen by students that had violence-oriented content (see Appendix G). Plans were made for students to bring tapes in next session to reflect and discuss current violent lyrics and themselves.

In contrast, the writer initiated discussion of the peace songs and antiviolent music of the 1960's while the students listened to the albums. Homework included completing a survey logging television violence. Refreshments were served and journals completed.

Week 6. During this week, the session focused on the abuse cycle, how to stop it, and why the students were the real victims of violence. The main topic, "Who are the Real Victims of Violence?," covered more closely the students' feelings about personal violence and the risk factors in their lives, home, school and community. The group also concluded the media and entertainment violence segment from the previous session by listening to current music and discussing its impact on the increase of violence among adolescents. They shared the results of their television

log and openly discussed TV violence. The discussion topic of the session focused mostly on the students' feelings of being victims and sharing their family histories of violence. Individual and group activities included completing a log of recognizing their feelings, answering questions on recognizing violence in their lives, and completing a family anger tree on how their family reacted and expressed their feelings when angry. Insights into how the students see their future anger trees were shared. Students also viewed a movie Kids Caught in the Crossfire: Violence in America designed for middle school students to encourage them to discuss issues affecting their lives and work toward productive solutions. At the conclusion of this session, the group reflected on the past six sessions and what they had learned about violence. Scores of the behavior management progress point system were reviewed with students and all journals entries were reviewed by the writer with student permission.

Weeks 7 and 8. During these weeks, the sessions focused on understanding anger, expressing anger, and managing anger.

Week 7, "Understanding Anger," covered what anger was and its function and causes, what made the students angry themselves, and how they felt when they got angry. The discussion topic of the session focused on the positive and negative functions of anger, and positive and negative

people in history who changed the world by being angry. Individual and group activities included students writing and discussing how often the students got angry, the things that made them angry, and how they expressed their anger appropriately. The writer and psychologist role-played appropriate expressions of anger for the students, and then they were encouraged to continue to role-play themselves.

Week 8, "Anger Management," covered how people in society and the students themselves expressed their anger, how they controlled their anger, and how they channeled their anger healthily. The discussion topic of the session further focused on nonviolent ways of expressing anger. Individual group activities included students' completing degree of anger scales and quizzes that helped students determine their anger styles. This session was videotaped by a parent and submitted as part of the "Increase the Peace Week" video.

Weeks 9, 10, and 11. During these weeks, the sessions focused on analyzing and understanding conflict and fighting, and utilizing conflict resolution and peer mediation.

Week 9, "Conflict and Fighting," covered the different kinds of conflict and fighting, the reasons that students fight, the feelings that motivated them to fight, and the consequences of fighting. The discussion topic of the session was different fights students had personally

experienced, the causes, and how they could have acted differently. Individual and group activities which included role playing were brief because during this session the group started discussing WW II and the Holocaust and it became evident how oblivious the students were to the greatest conflict of ethnic violence among nations in world history. With special parent permission, all 18 severe at-risk students watched Schindler's List in the classroom. It was an enlightening and powerful experience for all of them. Finally, students signed contracts, pledging their commitment to stop prejudice (see Appendix S) in hopes that violence like that of the Holocaust would never happen again.

Week 10, "Conflict Resolution," focused on students' sharing how to solve problems nonviolently. Individual and group activities included the group creating its own definition of conflict resolution and watching the movie Conflict Resolution. In addition, events for "Increase the Peace Week," the field project, students' poster contest ideas, and plans for the last group session were discussed by the group.

Week 11, "Peer Mediation," covered the peer mediation process. Individual and group activities included students creating a group definition of what peer mediation was. In addition, further plans for "Increase the Peace Week" activities were reviewed because the group acted as leaders

of the school's events. They helped with the students' poster contest and a parent videotaped the posters and the winner presentations in which four of the severe at-risk students won awards for their "Say No to Violence" posters. This session concluded early with the group rejoining the other students for a peer mediation presentation by four of the high school peer mediators and their coordinator.

Week 12. During this week, the session focused on review and summary of the program. Posttesting and evaluation of the VPP student component were completed by the eight students. Journal entries were reviewed by the writer and behavioral management points for appropriate behavior and achievement were totaled. Awards were given out to students.

Week 12, "Moving Forward in Peace," also covered closure for students and leaders, and the discussion topic of the session focused on how students can share the knowledge and information they've learned with others by modeling nonviolent behavior and advocating peaceful solutions to conflict. Individual and group activities included reviewing the directory of violence prevention resources for follow-up need or referral, and answering all questions and concerns. The practicum group then rejoined the other severe at-risk students for a pizza party in honor of "Moving Forward in Peace."

Parent Component

The writer also developed, coordinated, and implemented a parent component that helped the parents of the severe at-risk students to cope with violence in their own lives and that of their children. During the implementation the writer received indirect support from several parents. Parents assisted in videotaping activities of the practicum, attended some of the community speaker presentations, came to the VPP group sessions, and attended the pizza party. Parents received handouts on popular entertainment and media programs chosen by students that have violence-oriented content, a report on how parents can turn off TV violence , and a violence prevention resource directory. Other books, articles, legislator addresses, and miscellaneous information on violence were available for parents. Refreshments were served. Pretesting and posttesting questionnaires, and a workshop evaluation survey (see Appendices I and J) were completed by parents.

The formal parent component of the middle school VPP involved the parents meeting in a group for three 2-hour sessions to learn about violence prevention education, to learn, model, and review alternatives to violence, and to be educated in community resources. Prior to beginning the implementation of the parent component of the practicum, the writer interviewed and conferred with the majority of parents and discussed the goal and outline of the VPP.

Parents signed consent forms and 12 parents completed parent needs assessments (see Appendix C).

Session 1. During this session, "Parents Night, How to Keep Our Children Safe: A Violence Prevention Approach for Middle School Children" (see Appendix T), 12 parents met in a group with the writer and coleader and learned what violence was, recognized the extent of violence in their lives, gained support, and shared prevention strategies with each other.

Session 2. During this session, the writer had proposed that the parents meet with the writer, coleader, and a community speaker to further renew specific risk factors and available community resources. Unfortunately, a formal group session was cancelled because most parents could not attend an additional meeting because of other school commitments in June. They relayed that they had already met with the writer individually several times and had already discussed violence-related and behavioral issues. Most were already planning to meet with the writer again at the end of school for their children's special education meetings.

Session 3. The writer met individually with seven of the group's parents, 5 at school and 2 at home, and reviewed specific risk factors, and available community resources. Parents received individual intervention and supportive counseling with their children's issues. In addition twelve

parents met with the writer, the school psychologist, the special educator, the special education team members, and community care givers for students' annual evaluations. Students' progress as a result of the practicum was discussed.

School Personnel Component

The writer also developed, coordinated, and implemented a personnel component of the middle school VPP which involved staff attending a 2-hour workshop training session on violence prevention and two subsequent sessions to learn to identify risk factors, to learn effective strategies, to identify and deal with violent students, and to develop effective coping skills for the stress of teaching violence-oriented students. The turnout of school personnel interested in learning about violence prevention was overwhelming, and many school personnel from other middle schools within the system attended the workshop as well. Attendance was 68 staff members.

During the workshop training, school personnel received several handouts on children and guns, school violence, media and entertainment violence, violence prevention resources, and legislators' addresses. Other books, articles and miscellaneous information on violence including the writer's practicum proposal were available for staff to review and copy as needed.

Pretesting and posttesting questionnaires and a

workshop evaluation survey (see Appendices K and J) were completed by school personnel. Sessions 1 and 2 were videotaped for "Increase the Peace Week." Upon conclusion of the workshops, 30 staff members signed up for additional violence prevention training with the writer for the following school year.

Prior to beginning the school personnel implementation, the writer wrote a school personnel introduction letter (see Appendix E) and 28 staff members and 8 community professionals completed needs assessments. The writer met with the principal several times during the planning stages and he was very supportive of the workshops.

Session 1. During this session, "Middle School Violence Prevention," school personnel met in an inservice training group during an early release day (see Appendix U), gained information on violence prevention skills, shared strategies, provided peer supportive, and obtained information on community resources. Pretest questionnaires and workshops evaluations were completed. Initial feedback from school personnel indicated most staff was interested in alternatives and strategies rather than information on risk factors. Due to only a 2-hour session, time was limited and alternatives and effective violence prevention skills were not covered. Consequently, the writer relayed to staff at the conclusion of the first session and in a follow-up letter (see Appendix V) that the third 2-hour session in

June would be devoted entirely to violence prevention strategies and resources.

Session 2. During this informal session, 13 school personnel met with the writer and coleader in a small group and discussed particular problem areas of violence, shared problems of particular students, and received additional assistance from the writer and psychologist to deal with them. It became a close group and staff shared many feelings and concerns they had been unable to reveal at the training workshop.

Session 3. This session "Solutions Resources, and Effective Strategies for Violence Prevention in the Middle School," was the follow-up workshop training from the May session. The staff met with the writer and coleader and specifically reviewed solutions, learned new violent prevention skills, and shared new strategies with each other. Community resources were also discussed. Though this session was optional, 16 school personnel attended.

CHAPTER V

Results, Discussion, and Recommendations

Results

Since many of the seventh and eight-grade, severe at-risk students demonstrated violence-oriented behavior, the goal of this practicum was to decrease students' violence-oriented behavior by increasing their understanding of violence including its causes and effects and the extent to which violence plays a role in their lives; by increasing effective violence prevention approaches; and by increasing their knowledge of available community resources.

The severe at-risk students demonstrated frequency and severity of violence-oriented incidents in school. Students were court involved with criminal and school-related charges as a result of their behavior. The majority of students had grown up in a violent enviroment; demonstrated antisocial behavior; were physically, verbally, or sexually aggressive; were unable to avoid conflicts; had difficulty establishing positive relationships at school and at home; had difficulty communicating their feelings; and lacked violence-prevention skills. Overall, it was apparant that the severe at-risk students' violent behavior negatively affected their

physical, social, and emotional well being.

In addition, the majority of parents saw violence as a problem at home or at school, felt they didn't receive enough support to stop violence, lacked the skills to do do so, and were not aware of community resources. School personnel also shared similar responses to the students' violence-oriented behavior. The majority of school personnel felt violence was a problem for middle school students and their parents, didn't receive enough assistance to prevent violence, and didn't have enough skills to recognize, deal with, and help the students prevent violence.

The solution strategy included a middle school violence prevention program which featured three components: a 12-week interpersonal educational group for students, a three-session educational and support group for parents, and a three-session staff training workshop for school personnel. Outcomes were projected for each of the three groups.

Outcome 1

A decrease in the frequency of all 18 students' violence-oriented behavior would be demonstrated by a reduction of 14 out of 73 suspensions (19% decrease) for violence-oriented incidents during school year 1994-1995. This outcome was overwhelmingly met. An analysis of the suspension records indicated that there was a reduction of 39 suspensions (53% decrease) for violence-oriented

incidents. In addition, data indicated there was a significant decrease in the number of types of violence-oriented incidents as well as a decrease in the overall total of suspensions for school year 1994-1995 (see Table 1).

Table 1

Comparative Suspension Incidents of Students

	1993-1994		1994-1995	
Types of aggressive suspensions	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Physical	27	32	14	24
Verbal	25	29	10	17
Sexual	15	17	6	11
Miscellaneous	6	16	4	24
Total	73	84	34	59

A decrease in the severity of the students' violence-oriented behavior would be demonstrated by a reduction of 3 out of 12 juvenile court referrals for school offenses (25% decrease) and 2 out of 7 juvenile court referrals for criminal charges (29% decrease) in the school year 1994-1995. This outcome was also met. There was a reduction of 4 out of 12 juvenile court referrals for school offenses

(25% decrease) and 3 out of 5 for criminal charges (60% decrease) for school year 1994-1995 (see Table 2).

Table 2

Comparative Juvenile Court Charges of Students

	School-year	
Charges	1993-1994	1994-1995
School (CHINS)	12	8
Criminal	7	2
Total number of charges	19	10

A successful outcome would also be demonstrated by 5 out of 8 students of the VPP practicum group showing improvement in the pretest and posttest questionnaire scores and 5 out of 8 students evaluating the practicum intervention as a positive learning experience. This outcome was met. Six out of eight students improved their scores and two students scores remained the same. Interviews indicated that all eight students evaluated the VPP practicum as a positive learning experience. The supportive data indicated that students' scores improved on 7 out of 10 of the prevention skills, remained the same on two, and decreased on one (see Table 3).

Table 3

Results of Students' Pretest and Posttest Questionnaires and Evaluations

Students' understanding of prevention skills	Pretest Response			Posttest Response		
	Yes	No	Unsure	Yes	No	Unsure
1. Kinds of violence	8	0	0	8	0	0
2. Causes of violence	8	0	0	8	0	0
3. Why guns are dangerous	8	0	0	7	1	0
4. Why violent tv, movies, and video games can be dangerous	5	2	1	6	2	0
5. How to stop violence	3	2	3	8	0	0
6. How to control your anger	3	2	3	5	3	0
7. What conflict resolution is	0	8	0	5	1	2
8. What peer mediation is	0	8	0	7	1	0
9. Where to get help in the community	6	2	0	5	2	1
10. How to help others stop violence	4	3	1	8	0	0

An additional measurement of success would be demonstrated by 5 out of 8 students showing improvement on pre-and posttesting scores of the PPBC-R. The PPBC-R that was administered by the specialist before and after

implementation assessed behavioral, social, and emotional areas as well as academic. A 15% reduction in total percentile scores of aggressive behavior would demonstrate success. Although all behavior total raw and percentile scores showed improvement, this outcome was not met. None of the seven students' percentile scores showed a 15% total reduction and only 2 out of 7 students showed a 15% reduction in total raw scores (see Table 4).

Table 4

Results of Students' Pretest and Posttest Total Scores on the Portland Problem Behavior Checklist-Revised

	Pretest score		Posttest score		Score decrease	
Student	Raw	Percentile	Raw	Percentile	Raw	Percentile
1	55	98.1	50	97.0	5	1.1
2	69	98.2	64	98.5	5	0.2
3	75	99.5	39	89.5	5	2.5
4	57	96.0	52	94.5	5	0.5
5	41	92.0	37	91.5	4	1.8
6	46	92.1	42	94.0	4	1.8
7	59	97.1	51	94.5	8	2.6

Informal data on the students' improvement in violence prevention skills and behavior during and after

implementation of the practicum was collected by the writer from clinical interveiws, observations, and reports from students, parents, school personnel and community professionals.

Interview data. The writer interviewed students, parents, school personnel, and community care givers and collected data on the students' behavior and learned skills. The writer felt that interviews added validity to the results of other measurements of outcomes. Feedback from students had been positive throughout the implementation. Students as well as staff acknowledged the enjoyment and social gains they had experienced throughout the practicum. All eight severe at-risk students relayed during their interviews that they felt comfortable at all the practicum sessions and felt their understanding of violence and behavior had improved. Every student, except one who had issues with other group members, told the writer they loved the program. They anxiously awaited every session. All of the students responded that they enjoyed the practicum and would recommend the VPP to other students with problems. Students also reported that they enjoyed and learned from the community guest speaker presentations. When asked which presentations students felt were more beneficial they chose Gang Peace, the prison trip, family planning, AIDS, and racial violence.

The racial violence presentation was exceptionally

powerful and resulted in positive feedback mostly from the staff and parents. The Bosnian guest speaker, who defected from Sarajevo to the U.S. with 16 Bosnian adolescent basketball players 2 years ago, explained how the horrors of violence impacted the youth of Bosnia. In addition to the Bosnian speaker, students and parents gave positive feedback to the second presentor, Darryl, who described how three white Boston teenagers randomly shot into an all black high school football team huddle and disabled one of the players. Darryl, a quadriplegic victim of the crime, made a presentation that encouraged youth to have a greater sensitivity toward racial, gender, and violence issues through training students in conflict resolution and other alternative strategies. Several parents attended this presentation and two parents videotaped.

All 18 students responded that they gained information about their topics. Comments targeted what students had learned: "I learned how to stop violence," "I learned the most about drugs," "I don't ever want to go to prison," "I want to join peer mediation when I go to high school," "I hate the name of the program," and the most powerful being "now I know how to prevent AIDS." One student added that he got in less trouble at school and his parents were giving him more priviledges at home as a result of the program. Another student believed she felt less frustrated, controlled her attitude more, and got in less trouble.

Results from parent interviews about students' behavior and reactions to the VPP indicated they were very pleased with the program for their children. One of the parents commented she had gained information from the family planning presentation that she was totally naive to. One of the parents who videotaped the racial violence presentation relayed how inspiring the presentation was, and he emphasized his total support of the program.

Results from school personnel and community care givers' interviews were supportive as well. The writer conferred with the principal and vice principal. Both gave unconditional support of the VPP program and attended each presentation even if only to greet and thank the presenters. They felt the program had positive effects on the students.

Two DSS social workers and an outreach counselor were also interviewed by the writer. The DSS social worker relayed she felt the VPP program was excellent for her client who received none of this knowledge and education from the home. Another DSS social worker relayed that the group was positive for his client and he was pleased with his progress in group as he had had a difficult year previously socializing with other students. The counselor, whose agency the writer received a "seed" grant from, felt that the funding was put to excellent use. Overall, all interview data was positive. All agreed that students improved in violence prevention skills and knowledge.

Observational Data. The writer and psychologist concurred that during the VPP the majority of students were attentive, energized, and readily engaged in group discussion. They eagerly finished the activity sheets, brought in homework assignments, and completed journal entries independently. Students asked pertinent questions during the group and the community speaker presentations and expressed desires to join certain antiviolence groups. Students attentively listened to all presentations but especially to the director of Gang Peace who presented a powerful message about the information and skills students needed to avoid gangs and violence.

Students' behavior during the VPP group and presentations was very good which the behavior management point system documented. The majority of the more volatile students appeared less verbally aggressive. Only four times during group did students need to leave because of inappropriate behavior. However, there were two exceptions to the students' overall positive behavior. The first exception was the field trip to the prison. Although some students appeared intimidated upon entering the prison, several of the students did not act appropriately. They were rude and arrogant with the inmates, and several students were reprimanded by the correctional staff. On the bus trip home, five students were suspended for aggressive behavior. All of the remaining students were overly excited

and hyperactive on the bus as well. The second incident involved one of the students in the group carrying a knife to school in her backpack. Two of the other students in the group disclosed to this writer that the student had a weapon. Disciplinary protocal for carrying a weapon to school was followed. The student was suspended and criminal charges initiated. When the student reentered the VPP group, the issue was discussed in length with the student and her peers.

Report Data. Reports completed by school personnel and commmunity care givers included data about students' behavior and learned knowledge and the VPP practicum in general. The special educator included the positive influences of the VPP in each student's end of the year progress report to parents and special education department. Violence prevention goals of conflict resolution and peer mediation were writen into Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) where appropriate. The school psychologist recommended the VPP continue in school year 1995-1996 in his report to administration. All funding sources of the program reported that the grants were utilized well. The writer presented a written report of VPP practicum to the mayor's committe including practicum goals, implementation, and activities for "Increase the Peace Week." The principal wrote in the writer's annual evaluation about the VPP program and the commitment the writer and program had toward

servicing severe at-risk students.

Finally, student journal entries were reviewed by the writer and considered as informal reports. Students wrote many positive, pertinent comments: "I liked it, it told me a lot and I will be back next week," "I think more schools should have the program, I learned a lot," "I liked the food and I expressed my feelings very good," "Today was the first day of the VPP, and I think it was a good program," "I really liked it, I can't wait till next time," "Today we talked about violence risk factors," "We expressed our anger and told why we get angry," "The world is a better place when violence is discussed, I look forward to next week," "Today was very unique, the paperwork is okay cause its good to learn more," "I loved the movie Dating Violence, it had a strong effect on me and my girls," and "I hope to see more movies like this, they should have this kind of stuff on TV so that more people could understand how it is." The writer's favorite although ungrammatical reaction was from the most violence-oriented student of the group: "I liked it a lot. It kept me out of trouble and hopefully I could benefit from this class and everything that happened was exciting. I think a lot of kids could benefit from this program maybe they could start this program in many other schools. We talked about upsets us and what I've feel like."

Negative comments were few but recognized and responded

to by the writer. Some included "I hated the movie, [Conflict Resolution] it was fake," "I cannot stand [name] cuz he is a son of a witch and he just gets on my nerves," "I am mad because you did not pay any attention to what I was saying," "The music [60's] was boring," "I was trying to talk and no one would let me talk," "I liked it a little today and I'm sick and tied of the food," "It was confusing and a lot of paper work," "It's getting me aggravated," and "No more 60's music!"

Concluding remarks at the end of the program were significant: "I had fun throughout the sessions and learned a lot," "I loved this program, I'm going to miss it," "I hope all you have this program next year," "I made a promise that I will not be prejudice again," and "So good by, I hope you have a good life, let all your sadness go." The writer's favorite concluding remark again was from the same student "I'm having a difficult time saying goodby."

Outcome 2

Outcome success for the parent component of the VPP would be measured by 8 out of 12 (66%) parents showing improvement on the pretest and posttest questionnaire (see Appendix I) and evaluating the implementation as a positive learning experience. Post program interviews would also be conducted and feedback from parents would be reviewed by the writer. This outcome was met. Ten out of 12 parents completed the questionnaires. All parents completed the

evaluation survey (see Appendix J).

Results from the data indicated that 8 out of 10 (80%) parents showed improvement in their pretest and posttest scores and two scores remained the same. All parents evaluated the parent component as a positive learning experience with 11 parents rating the parent implementation as excellent and one parent rating it as good.

Several of the parents were interviewed during school and home visits, during attendance at and videotaping of the presentations, during group meetings, and during students' special education team meetings. All feedback was positive. Parents openly relayed this type of program was needed in the schools and should be offered at the high school level. Several parents expressed concerns about their children attending the high school due to the reported violence. The parent that attended the racial violence presentation reiterated how important it was for students to see that not all violence ends in death. She felt that students needed to realize they could become quadriplegic and live life in a wheelchair as a result of violence. The VPP was discussed at every students' team meeting and parents overwhelmingly supported the program and appreciated the intervention for their child whether they personally attended the component or not.

Outcome 3

Outcome success of the school personnel component of

the VPP would be measured by 22 out of 28 (78%) school personnel showing improvement on the pretest and posttest questionnaire (see Appendix K) and evaluating the school component as a positive learning experience. Post group interviews were conducted and school personnel questionnaires were reviewed by the writer. This outcome was met. Out of the 68 staff members who attended the school personnel component, 37 completed the pretest and posttest questionnaires and 56 staff members completed the workshop evaluation survey.

Results from the data indicated that 33 out of 37 (89%) school personnel showed improvement in their pretest and posttest scores and 4 staff scores remained the same. Fifty-one staff members evaluated the school personnel implementation as a positive learning experience with 18 staff members rating the implementation as excellent, 18 as good, 15 as fair, and 5 as poor.

Several of the staff were interviewed by the writer after the first session and then again when all sessions were completed. Initial positive comments included "Great info," "Thanks for sharing," "Great Job," and "Interesting info and discussion but needed more on violence prevention." Written comments received from the questionnaire completed by staff and other community care providers included the following: "We need this program in all the middle schools," "I'd be willing to volunteer to help next year," "It's too

bad more kids aren't involved," and "This is needed in the community as well."

Constructive comments and identified problems included "More time for solutions," "Too much lecture," "Tried to present too much in too short a time," "Need more information on how to deal with students and their parents," "Everyone is not aware of the program, only those directly involved," "School needs more inservice training," and "Why can't other students who have problems receive the same kind of support?"

School personnel directly involved with the severe at-risk students observed students' behavior during the months of implementation. They concurred that they had seen overall positive changes since the implementation began especially with students' attitude, defiance, and motivation.

In addition, interviews with school staff and a review of school records showed that one student in particular had made good progress tooling his anger and frustration in a acceptable manner, though he still continued to tease others and tried to get in the last word especially when reprimanded by adults. Another student's previous history of inappropriate sexual behavior was not as much an issue after being in VPP. Reports indicated that another student had made remarkable progress in turning her attitude, behavior, and poor attendance around. Another student had

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made significant improvement in not leaving classes and not roaming the halls and was not as belligerent when she couldn't get her own way.

Overall, all data indicated that the VPP was influential in decreasing students' antisocial behavior and parents and school personnel benefited from the practicum implementation.

Discussion

The overall outcomes of this practicum were overwhelmingly met. The goals of the student, parent, and school personnel components were achieved as supported by data results. The violence-oriented behavior of the seventh and eighth-grade, severe at-risk students decreased. Their understanding of violence including the causes and effects and the recognition of how violence played a role in their lives increased, their utilization of violence prevention approaches improved, and their knowledge of available community resources increased. Goals for parents were also achieved. Their recognition of the violence in their lives increased, their understanding of the risk factors of violence improved, their awareness of violence prevention strategies improved, and their knowledge of community resources increased. School personnel also benefited from the implementation. Their overall insights to what violence is and the extent it is present in students lives improved,

their knowledge of the risk factors and available community resources increased, and their understanding of solutions and strategies utilized to prevent student violence was refined.

Upon reviewing the data for Outcome 1, the student component of the practicum, it was apparent all measurements of success were met except for one. Data supported that the number of violence-oriented incidents of all the severe at-risk students leading to suspension decreased significantly in school year 1994-1995 while the VPP was implemented. In addition, data supported that the severity and types of violence-oriented behavior decreased dramatically for the school year. There were fewer physical, verbal, and sexual aggressive incidents. Students' CHINS and criminal charges decreased in juvenile court, and the positive pretesting and posttesting questionnaire results indicated that students gained invaluable prevention skills. Informal and formal interviews, observations, and reports further supported the success of the student component.

The outcome that was not met was the decrease of students' percentile scores for aggressive behavior by 15% on the PPBC-R. A possible explanation of this result was that the percentile scoring decrease was unrealistically set by the writer in the beginning of the practicum. Although all students' raw scores decreased and all students' percentile scores decreased, raw scores for aggressive

behavior would have to have decreased by almost 50% to make a percentile decrease of 15% according to standard deviations and norms of the PPBC-R (Waksman, 1984). It was unrealistic for students with such long-standing severe behavior problems to change their raw scores in behavior that much during a 12-week program.

The overall result of the students' VPP proved positive with additional unexpected outcomes. Students openly revealed how much they loved the program and how much they learned. Their feelings were the truest measurement of success. Twelve weeks of groups in combination with the community speaker presentations worked well timewise; a multisensory approach kept their attention and creativity flowing; art work like art therapy, helped them to relax and express their fears and feelings on violence; and a behavior management progress point system with reinforcers helped keep their behavior in check. The sessions were organized and consistent and worked well for the students. Each session each week consisted of a group activity, group discussion topic, activity sheets, audiovisual aid, homework assignment, refreshments, and journal entries. Students understood what was expected of them and knew what they could expect at each session. Students reacted intensely to Schindler's List and the extent of racial violence that existed during WWII. It proved to be a rewarding learning experience. Students also revealed they felt like crusaders

of peace during "Increase the Peace Week." Their involvement appeared to increase their self-esteem as a result of receiving group counseling and having their poster contest art work displayed and videotaped. Also, the students developed a special closeness to the writer during the implementation and openly revealed they were proud of the writer and proud to be chosen to participate in the program she developed.

The data for Outcome 2, the parent component of the practicum, indicated that all measurements of success were met. Data supported that parents learned from their implementation component and were pleased with the results of the student component. Though the writer would have liked parents to attend Session 2, overall the writer was impressed with the amount of parent support received. In the writer's past experience, parent support was usually more limited. One explanation, as indicated by the parents' needs assessments, for why this outcome was met and why parent support was so strong, was that parents truly felt violence was a problem. They were fearful for their children and needed as much support as possible.

The data for Outcome 3, the school personnel component of the practicum, indicated that all measurements of success were met. The majority of school personnel learned from their implementation component, gained education on the causes and effects of violence and the negative impact it

had on the students and school, gained strategies on how to cope with the violence-oriented student, and received information on available community resources.

School personnel needs assessments supported that staff was concerned with the violence among school students and was motivated to learn preventive strategies. This was also shown by the overwhelming attendance of 68 school personnel at the first workshop training. Despite the good attendance, only 37 staff members completed the pretest and posttest questionnaires and 57 completed the survey. Though the overall results were more positive than negative, the writer was concerned with the negative feedback from staff after the first workshop. Feedback indicated that not enough emphasis was put on strategies and alternatives because of time restraints. This was rectified by the writer devoting the third workshop training solely to violence prevention interventions and strategies. Unfortunately, the attendance at the remaining sessions was poor therefore many of the original staff did not receive the interventions they requested. Additional negative feedback from staff related to the discussion of stricter gun control during the first workshop. Many staff members strongly felt that stricter gun control was unconstitutional. Some disagreed with the writer about banning guns and felt she was too adamant about her opinion.

In spite of this criticism, the overall results of the

school personnel component were positive. School personnel were impressed with the behavior changes in the severe at-risk students, and they commented on the positive impact the VPP and community speaker presentations had on the students and staff who attended the sessions. A community-based therapist who counseled one of the students relayed, "We need more programs like this in the community and especially at the high school level" (therapist, personal communication, May 28, 1995).

There were several other positive unexpected outcomes of this practicum. One was that the school department recognized violence as a problem for students at the middle school level and realized the importance of a middle school violence prevention program. Another achievement included the cable television videotaping of activities for "Increase the Peace Week" that involved all the middle school students. Because of this practicum, the mayor's office and council for violence prevention has taken much interest in the school department's middle school programs. The writer's work and commitment to violence prevention were overwhelmingly supported by the director of the council.

In another unexpected outcome, students gained a better appreciation of stricter gun control. This was evinced by writing to Sarah Brady and to local, state and national officials, including President Clinton and Senator Bob Dole, advocating stricter gun control. Students also gained

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knowledge of the Holocaust and gained a better appreciation of international and racial violence by watching Schindler's List.

In summary there were many expected and unexpected achievements of this practicum, but most importantly the students became more aware of their violence-oriented behavior, decreased their antisocial behavior, and openly advocated nonviolence to other middle school students.

Recommendations

Though collecting data and analyzing its results are important factors in any program, Sattler (1992) finds the most important factor is the quality of the recommendations. Recommendations for this practicum are based on the VPP's pattern of overall performance, its strengths and weaknesses, and the implications of this pattern for changing students' behavior. A comprehensive plan was developed with the object of improving the VPP. The recommendations needed to be realistic and practical. The following recommendations for this practicum need to be implemented at the writer's work place.

Student Component Recommendations

1. The VPP needs to be implemented in the school year, ideally in the fall, allowing ample time for follow-up and evaluation throughout the school year. A refresher session for students needs to be implemented prior to the summer

vacation, a time period where violent crime is frequent.

2. The program needs to have a new name created by the students which is more indicative of the program's goals and more personal for the students' needs.

3. The knowledge and skills that students have learned from the program need to be incorporated more into their individual educational plans.

4. More emphasis needs to be placed on students' recognizing the benefit of counseling. Students who need further intervention with violence issues after completion of the implementation need to be referred for further individual or group counseling.

5. The program needs to increase the emphasis on making students realize they are not invincible. Additional presentations like the racial violence presentation are essential.

6. Community speakers with the more powerful social messages need to return for follow-up. They also need to complete feedback questionnaires after the presentations to add to the evaluation process.

7. It is apparent that some students are not cognizant of the atrocities of WWII and the Holocaust. The writer recommends this issue be referred to the principal, social studies teachers, and department head.

8. Based on the positive outcomes, this program needs to be expanded to benefit other at-risk students from

seventh and eighth-grade classes. A modified version is recommended for regular seventh and eighth-grade students. In addition, a VPP that is adjusted to grade level needs to be expanded to include fifth and sixth-grade students of the middle school.

9. This practicum is appropriate for the high school level. It should be expanded to benefit all high school students. Students need to be taught nonviolent skills as early as kindergarten in school (Foreman, 1994). The VPP could be expanded by developing an elementary component. Middle school students would visit the lower grade classrooms and provide mentoring violence prevention services to elementary students.

10. As a result of program expansion, the coordinator's position needs to be expanded as well. Ideally, a system wide school coordinator heading a committee of violence prevention services needs to established.

11. The writer recommends annual follow-up evaluation of the behavior of the severe at-risk students until high school graduation.

12. The VPP should continue to utilize the same measurements of success, but adjust the percentile rate of aggression on the PPBC-R to a more realistic outcome of success. Additional behavioral checklists scales such as the Waksman Social Skills Rating Scale or the Socio-

Emotional Dimension Scale are also recommended as valid measurements of success.

13. The writer recommends that further funding be allocated for VPP programs throughout the school system.

14. All components of the VPP need to be formally evaluated by an unbiased research and evaluation team. Positive results are needed to justify an increase in state and federal grants. Results would be shared with administration. Recommendations should be reviewed, changes made, and incorporated into the program for the following school year.

15. The program needs to be more publicized. Its outcome results and strengths and weaknesses need to be shared with school administration, the mayor's committee, and community leaders.

16. Finally, students, parents, school personnel, and community care providers need to advocate the benefits of the program in school, in home, and in the community.

Parent Component Recommendations

1. The first priority of the program is to increase support and involvement from more parents. As Kazdin, Silgel, and Bass (1992) found in the evaluations of problem-solving skills training, programs achieved their goals better when parents were more actively involved in the treatment and could foster the use of problem-solving steps in the home. The present parents could mentor new parents

entering the program.

2. Parents need to attend more educational training sessions. Funding for transportation and babysitting services is recommended to enable parents to attend more readily.

3. Parent education sessions need to be implemented earlier in the school year enabling parents to attend more sessions than they would have at the end of the year.

4. More parents need to be encouraged to attend the student group and community speaker presentations with their children. Parents need to feel welcomed by school staff and not intimidated to be involved in their children's education.

5. Parents that have individual violence problems could meet with the writer individually before attending a group setting.

6. Families that have a history of violence need to be referred to community agencies for counseling.

7. Parents need to show more interest with the students' homework assignments on violence prevention.

8. Finally, parents need to advocate the continued implementation of the VPP in school, in home, and in the community.

School Personnel Recommendations

1. The writer recommends additional staff training workshops, specifically focusing on more strategies and

alternatives to violence.

2. Support staff, such as guidance counselors, psychologists, and social workers need to refer parents who have a propensity for violence to the parent sessions even if their children are not directly involved with the program.

3. As a result of the workshops, school personnel have requested a college credit course in violence prevention be offered in the school system in addition to workshops. The writer supports the recommendation and has been approached by the assistant superintendent to facilitate it.

4. School personnel need to be encouraged to initiate more parent involvement and reinforce parents' commitment to attend violence prevention sessions.

5. The writer needs to be less demonstrative about the issue of stricter control during workshop training sessions. Staff needs to know they can voice their opinion without any repercussions.

6.The writer recommends that the staff training workshops be expanded to the community agencies as many of the community care givers have requested. This could also include staff training of the local police department cadettes and on-going inservice training with the juvenile court officials.

7. The writer feels the school needs to have a closer collaboration with DSS to better assist parents and students

with violence at home and in the community, consequently decreasing the negative stigma of DSS involvement.

8. Most importantly, there is a need for school, parents, and the community to work together to solve the rise of violent crime among adolescents. The writer recommends continued collaboration with community agencies and city officials and advocates further involvement by all.

In conclusion, it is the writer's contention that these recommendations be implemented into future VPPs. Once these recommendations are completed, the program should be reassessed to see if the action plans have effectively improved the practicum and its results.

Dissemination

This practicum will be disseminated to other professionals in several ways. First, within the school system, the writer will present the results to school administration, coleaders of the VPP, the middle school principal, school personnel, parents, and students. It is also important that other educators from other schools in the system be aware of the positive results. This could be accomplished by further workshops and inservices with a letter of introduction from the writer. In addition, since the writer served on a panel at an evening workshop with system-wide school personnel and parents in spring of 1994 regarding reactions to the TV special Kids Killing Kids, the

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results of this practicum could be available for the next panel discussion.

Because the writer serves on the committee to develop a violence prevention curriculum for all middle school students, the results of this practicum could be presented. The writer's proposal and implementation progress was presented last year with much positive feedback and interest from administration and the committee members. Because the writer had been asked to develop further workshops and to teach a violence prevention course to school personnel for which 30 staff members from two middle schools have already signed up, this practicum could be shared and used as an example of a successful VPP. The writer was also contacted by the Drug and Alcohol Educational Educator to help write future grants for the school system specializing in violence prevention. In addition, the writer agreed to speak at teen topics, parent PTAs, and local subsidized housing project tenant and parent meetings on how to help children stay safe and violence free. Because these groups have been very interested in the writer's violence prevention and motivation, the practicum results could be presented.

This practicum could also be disseminated to professionals in the community in other ways. School administration and the mayor's council for violence prevention have been very interested in the writer's practicum. As a member of the council the writer presented

the practicum proposal and monthly progress reports to the council. Support from the director and council has been very positive. The writer also has been approached by the council's director to work with the council to secure future city grants for the VPP if it is approved by administration. The results of this practicum could be readily shared with the council by the writer at the next meeting.

The writer sees the importance of disseminating the practicum results to community care givers because many have already expressed the need for further violence prevention training. Feedback on the practicum implementation from involved community care givers was overwhelmingly supportive. The writer could disseminate this practicum by discussing the results with the community care givers, presenting a brief synopsis of the results, and presenting workshop training at their community work place. Because the writer is well known and respected among the community, the writer feels her expertise in violence prevention would be welcomed and not threatening to other care givers. Some community agencies where the writer feels violence prevention training would be beneficial include DSS, community counseling centers, outreach agencies, housing projects, women resource centers, juvenile probation, DYS, and teen mother programs. The writer could also share the results with the program's community presenters and the coordinator of the prison program. The writer plans to

share this practicum by speaking at conferences. The writer plans to contact coalitions and county alliances to offer training services.

The local police department has been very supportive of the writer's practicum and violence prevention work. The writer has discussed the VPP with several police officers and the captain of the police department. All have been especially involved with the anticrime movement. The captain was interested in the VPP and gave two presentations to the severe at-risk students. The writer and captain have discussed students and the writer working more closely with the police department on a city wide violence prevention approach. The writer could ideally disseminate this practicum by providing workshop training on adolescence violence to the police department. In addition, the writer has disseminated this practicum when attending violence prevention conferences. At every conference attended, the writer specifically introduced herself as a Nova Southeastern doctoral student and briefly discussed this practicum with lecturers in the violence prevention field.

Lastly, the writer's practicum was disseminated to the public by the videotaping of the VPP for "Increase the Peace Week" on the local cable television station. This was very exciting for the writer, coleaders, and students. In combination with the video, the writer plans to write short articles regarding the VPP and to submit them to the local

newspaper, middle school newsletter, and Massachusetts and National Education Associations.

Conclusion

The writer concluded that the goals of this practicum have been achieved; the violence-oriented behavior of seventh and eighth-grade, severe at-risk students decreased, and parents and school personnel increased their knowledge and skills in violence prevention. The solution, a middle school violence prevention program with a parent and school personnel component proved effective. Everyone benefited. This VPP was just one of many programs implemented nationwide and the writer believes there are many good plans for violence prevention still being developed. The writer concurs wholeheartedly with the recommendations of Prothrow-Stith (1987) that a health education initiative ought to be part of a national campaign for violence prevention. Consistent standardized curricula and programs are needed in public schools nationally. Like Prothrow-Stith, Merina (1995) agrees with the quote from mediation specialist, Edward Maxwell from Maryland, "A violence prevention program and or conflict resolution program gives disputants the skills to avoid violence. With that in place, a student can learn in peace" (p.11).

The writer also concurs that as effective as the practicum appeared to be there were still recommendations

needed to improve the VPP. Time should be allowed to renew and modify it and to reflect new insights and learning. The initial results of this practicum should be reported to school administration. It was the writer's contention that these results be considered in the decision-making process in the future of the VPP.

Upon reflection of the practicum implementation, the writer realizes several things. Because of the practicum, the writer has gained a higher appreciation of research and educational evaluation. The contributions they have given to knowledge about violence prevention are irreplaceable. New knowledge constantly being developed about how to decrease violent crime enables social workers to improve their practice in education and enables school systems to provide more effective programs for students and a higher quality of education.

As the writer's violence prevention (expertise) became more known in the school system and community, the writer found this personally and professionally rewarding. The writer's goals as a social worker to solve problems, form trusting relationships, communicate effectively, and think critically and creatively continue to reinforce personal and professional growth. The writer agrees with McCune's (1986) theory on leadership that the humanistic style is needed in society more than ever before. With the increase in violence among today's youth, a compassionate and

interpersonal approach is irreplaceable in trying to reach the students. There will always need to be that balancing, human response because as Merina (1995) quoted from the mediation specialist, "Deep down inside, no child ever wants to be violent" (p.11).

In conclusion, the writer concurs with Senge (1990) that there has never been a greater need for people working together than there is today. As a leader of an issue so complex as violence prevention and as a mother of four children, the writer wholeheartedly agrees. Our children are our future; to keep them safe and healthy is every parent and educator's goal.

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APPENDIX A

NATIONAL CENTERS OF RESEARCH STATISTICS FOR YOUTH VIOLENCE

NATIONAL CENTERS OF RESEARCH STATISTICS
FOR YOUTH VIOLENCE

Bureau of Justice Statistics

Center for Disease Control

Center to Prevent Handgun Safety

Children's Defense Funds

Department of Education Safe School Program

Department of Education Youth Risk Survey

Department of Justice

FBI Uniform Crime Report

National Pediatric Trauma Registry at Tufts Medical Center

National School Safety Center

National Center for Education Statistics

National Institute of Mental Health

National Center for Health Statistics

National Safety Council

Office of Educational Research and Improvement

Unified Crime Reports

APPENDIX B

STUDENT NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY

MIDDLE SCHOOL VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAM
STUDENTS NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY

Fill in boxes with the responses of either YES or NO or NOT SURE.

_____ 1. Do you know what violence is?

_____ 2. Do you feel there is violence in your life?

_____ 3. Do you feel there is violence in the lives of the people you care about?

_____ 4. Do you feel there is violence with students in school?

_____ 5. Do you feel you know what causes violence?

_____ 6. Do you feel you know how to stop violence?

_____ 7. Do you feel you want to learn how to stop violence?

_____ 8. Do you feel school can help you learn how to stop violence?

_____ 9. Do you feel your parents can help you learn to stop violence?

_____ 10. Do you feel you now how to get help in the community to help you stop the violence?

Name three things you would like to learn about violence.

_____

_____

_____

Name three places you can get help from to stop violence.

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX C

PARENT NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY

MIDDLE SCHOOL VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAM
PARENTS NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY

Please answer the following questions by writing the number of the response that best describes your feelings.

1. NO—Not At All 2. Just a Little 3. No opinion
4. Pretty Much 5. YES—Very Much

___ 1. Do you feel violence is a problem for your child?

___ 2. Do you feel violence can be a problem for you?

___ 3. Do you feel students find it difficult to say no to violence?

___ 4. Do you feel students want to say no to violence?

___ 5. Can you identify and recognize violence in your child?

___ 6. Do you feel your child understands the risk factors of violence?

___ 7. Do you feel want information on how to deal with violence in your child?

___ 8. Does your child understand the alternatives to violence?

___ 9. Do you feel you have enough support from others to help you deal with violence in your child?

___ 10. Are you aware of what community services are available to help?

Please indicate any suggestions as to what information you would find most helpful for you if you were to attend a parent program on violence prevention for the students?

_____

_____

_____

Please indicate any suggestions to what services you feel would be most helpful for you and the children?

_____

_____

_____

Any other comments are appreciated as well.

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX D

SCHOOL PERSONNEL NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY

MIDDLE SCHOOL VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAM
SCHOOL PERSONNEL NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY

Please answer the following questions by writing the number of the response that best describes your feelings.

1. NO—Not At All 2. Just a Little 3. No opinion
4. Pretty Much 5. YES—Very Much

___ 1. Do you feel violence is a problem for middle school students?

___ 2. Do you feel violence is a problem for their parents?

___ 3. Do you feel students receive adequate intervention to prevent violence?

___ 4. Do you feel parents receive adequate intervention to prevent violence?

___ 5. Do you feel you have been taught viable skills to identify and recognize the violence-oriented students?

___ 6. Do you feel you have been taught to recognize the factors that contribute to violence-oriented students?

___ 7. Do you feel you have been taught the skills to deal with the students?

___ 8. Do you feel you have information of what the risk factors are of students?

___ 9. Do you feel you understand them?

___ 10. Do you feel you have information on alternative strategies to violence?

___ 11. Do you feel you have information of the availability of community resources for students?

___ 12. Do you feel you have enough support from peers, professionals, and administration to deal with the stress of teaching violence-oriented students?

1. Please indicate any areas or issues you would like to see covered in the initial inservice on violence prevention.

_____

_____

_____

2. What mode of presenting do you feel would best meet your needs? (books, films, articles, speakers, case studies, overview of the students curriculum, lecture, supportive group counseling, resources, handouts, direct service)

_____

_____

_____

3. Please indicate any suggestions to what services you feel would be most helpful for the students as they proceed through the program.

_____

_____

_____

Any other comments are appreciated.

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX E

SCHOOL PERSONNEL INTRODUCTION LETTER

SCHOOL PERSONNEL INTRODUCTION LETTER

January 23, 1995

Dear Staff,

Through my work with the severe at risk students and through my doctoral studies at Nova Southeastern University, I continue to do extensive research and practicum specialization in the area of youth violence.

Although at present time there are no programs in-system that specifically target violence prevention, there are plans currently being discussed. With the appreciated support from Gerry Puccini and school administration, I have developed and will be coordinating a pilot middle school violence prevention program that will be implemented this spring at Mulcahey School with the severe at-risk students. It will be colead by myself and school psychologist John DePaolo with the assistance of behavioral specialist Cheryl Germaine. There will be a school personnel component which is being planned for April's early release day.

Please assist me in this informal stage of my practicum dissertation by completing this needs assessment survey so I can be assured that the inservice will address your needs and concerns, answer your questions, and be informative yet interesting for you. Upon completion, put the forms in my mail box.

As Senge (1990) relays there has never been a greater need for people working together than there is today. As a leader of an issue so complex as violence prevention, I wholeheartedly agree. Our children are our future; to keep them safe and healthy is every parent's and educator's goal. Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Jody S. Persons
School Social Worker/School
Adjustment Counselor
Mulcahey/Martin Middle School
Taunton Public Schools

APPENDIX F

SPECIAL EDUCATOR INTERVIEW

SPECIAL EDUCATOR INTERVIEW

The following is a synopsis of an interview with C. Germaine, the special educator of the seventh and eighth-grade, severe at-risk students. She discusses her concerns about her students in the severe at-risk program and the increase in violence-oriented behavior of today's youth.

As a special education teacher, I've worked with at-risk students for almost 10 years and have dealt with students' violent behavior on a daily basis. The majority of my students are violent because they are exposed to violence daily. Violence in the families is the number one cause of my students' violenct behavior. They have inappropriate and violent role models and they look at older brother and cousins as heroes and status symbols when they carry guns and deal drugs.

There's a combination of reasons why I feel my students don't recogize the violence in their lives. They've seen generations of their family go through it so they accept it as normal, they use strong defense mechanisms to avoid the fear and pain of violence in their lives, and they see uselessness in trying to change.

Most of my students are exposed to violence through the projects in the city where they have access to guns, drugs, and a sense of power. The majority of my students have been from minority families and socioeconomic backgrounds with a multitude of social problems.

Ten years ago, my students fought their battles verbally or physically with their hands and their violent behavior escalated from calm to instant rage, but weapons were not used. Five years ago, I had a year where all my students were physically aggressive especially the girls, including sexual violence. Two and three years ago, I had all 8th grade students who resorted to solving their problems with guns and knives, and the police were involved constantly. This year my students are more verbally aggressive than physically. I think they are finally beginning to understand they can solve their problems without physical contact.

I see VPPs, conflict resolution, peer mediation and the support of parents as the approach to take with students, and it must be through the schools which is the center of

most at-risk students' lives. Parents need to stay involved with their children in school and at home. Fortunately, over the years I have had a good working relationship with most of my parents. It is so important for family and school to work together. It makes all the difference for helping the students. Hopefully through school programs, students will learn to solve their problems nonviolently.

In conslusion, schools need to focus on these serious issues. Staff needs to be trained and programs need to be implemented, and funds need to be allocated quickly if we are to save the lives of children and break the violence cycle.

APPENDIX G

POPULAR ENTERTAINMENT AND MEDIA PROGRAMS CHOSEN BY STUDENTS THAT HAVE VIOLENCE-ORIENTED CONTENT

POPULAR ENTERTAINMENT AND MEDIA PROGRAMS*
CHOSEN BY STUDENTS THAT HAVE
VIOLENCE-ORIENTED CONTENT

Movies
Menace to Society
Boys in the Hood
On Deadly Ground
Hard to Kill
New Jack City
Juice
Natural Born Killers
Poetic Justice
Jurassic Park
Beverly Hills Cop
The Good Son
Getting Even With Dad
Chucky
Robo Cop
Hallowween
Psycho
Freddy & Jason
Adams Family I & II
Home Alone I & II
Problem Child I & II

TV Shows
Walker, Texas Ranger
NY Undercover
Cops
Unsolved Mysteries
South Central
NYPD Blue
Homicide
America's Most Wanted
Top Cops
Tales from the Crypt
X Files

Cartoons
Roadrunner
Beavis and Butthead
Itchy and Scratchy
Ren and Stimpy
Power Rangers

Cartoons (cont'd)
VR Troopers
Simpsons
Tom and Jerry
Beetlejuice
Tales from the Crypt
Batman
X-Men

Video Games
Mortal Combat I, II, & III
Ren and Stimpy
Street Fighter
Eternal Chapion
Shaq Fu
Final Fight
WWF Wrestling
Mutant League Football
Beavis and Butthead
Alot of Blood
Ninjas Turtles
Duck Hunt
Incredible Hunk

Music Lyrycists
Ice Ten
Snoop Doggy Dog
Green Day
Offspring
Cyprus Hill
Ice Cube
Ed. O.G. and the Bulldogs
Nirvana
Guns n'Roses
Megadeath
Warren G. & Nate Dogs
Madonna
Rated X

*These programs will be shared and discussed with students, parents, and school personnel during the practicum implementation.

APPENDIX H

STUDENT PRETEST POSTTEST QUESTIONNAIRE

MIDDLE SCHOOL VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAM
STUDENT PRETEST POSTTEST QUESTIONNAIRE

Please write YES or NO or UNSURE in the response box.

_____ 1. Do you understand the different kinds of violence?

_____ 2. Do you understand what causes violence?

_____ 3. Do you understand why guns are dangerous?

_____ 4. Do you understand why violent TV, movies, and video games can be dangerous?

_____ 5. Do you understand how to stop violence?

_____ 6. Do you understand how to control your anger?

_____ 7. Do you understand what conflict resolution is?

_____ 8. Do you understand what peer mediation is?

_____ 9. Do you know the places in the community where you can get help with violence?

_____ 10. Do you know how to help others stop violence?

APPENDIX I

PARENT PRETEST POSTTEST QUESTIONNAIRE

MIDDLE SCHOOL VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAM
PARENT PRETEST POSTTEST QUESTIONNAIRE

Please write YES or NO or UNSURE in the response box.

_____ 1. Do you know the extent of violence in society?

_____ 2. Do you know how to recognize violence in your children's life?

_____ 3. Do you know the causes of violence?

_____ 4. Do you know the effects of violence on your children?

_____ 5. Do you have enough information on how to deal with violence-oriented behavior of your child?

_____ 6. Do you know the alternatives to violence?

_____ 7. Do you talk with other parents about violence?

_____ 8. Do you know the effects of TV, movies, and video games have on children?

_____ 9. Do you know what community services are available to help with violence?

_____ 10. Do you know how to help others stop violence?

APPENDIX J

WORKSHOP EVALUATION

MIDDLE SCHOOL VIOLENCE PREVENTION
WORKSHOP EVALUATION

Decreasing the violence-oriented behavior of seventh and eighth-grade, severe at-risk students through the development of a middle school violence prevention program.

1. The value of the workshop information was:

_____ _____ _____ _____
poor fair good excellent

2. The quality of content was:

_____ _____ _____ _____
poor fair good excellent

3. The quality of presentation was:

_____ _____ _____ _____
poor fair good excellent

4. The quality of organization was:

_____ _____ _____ _____
poor fair good excellent

5. The quality of professional support was:

_____ _____ _____ _____
poor fair good excellent

*The overall evaluation of the workshop was:

_____ _____ _____ _____
poor fair good excellent

Comments:

_____

_____

_____

If I can be of additional assistance or you would like to speak with me privately, please feel free to leave your name and how you can be reached.

Name:_____

I can be reached at:_____

APPENDIX K

SCHOOL PERSONNEL PRETEST POSTTEST QUESTIONNAIRE

MIDDLE SCHOOL VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAM
SCHOOL PERSONNEL QUESTIONNAIRE

Please write YES or NO or UNSURE in the response box.

_____ 1. Are you aware of the extent of violence involving today's youth?

_____ 2. Do you know what steps are being taken in the city to prevent violence?

_____ 3. Do you know the causes of violence?

_____ 4. Do you know what a student violence prevention program is?

_____ 5. Do you know the effects the media and entertainment industry have on violence?

_____ 6. Do you have enough information on how to deal with the violence-oriented student?

_____ 7. Do you know what conflict resolution is?

_____ 8. Do you know what peer mediation is?

_____ 9. Do you have support from peers and professionals to prevent student violence?

_____ 10. Do you know what community services are available to help students with violence?

APPENDIX L

COMMUNITY GUEST SPEAKER PRESENTATIONS

COMMUNITY GUEST SPEAKER PRESENTATIONS

TOPIC	SPEAKER
How to Quit Smoking	Katie Gates Women, Infant, and Children's Program (WIC)
Crime Prevention	Captain Pimental City Police Department
Drug Prevention	Robert Wiggens Narconon Drug Prevention
Violence Prevention	Rodney Dailey Gang Peace Advocacy
Teen Violence/Date Rape	Nancy Schneider New Hope Women's Center
Juvenile Crime	Cheryl Beaurguard Probation Juvenile Court
Peer Mediation	High School Peer Mediation Group
Racial Violence	Darryl Williams and Yuro Northeastern Center for the Study of Sport in Society Rebok Foundation
Adolescent Hygiene	School Nurse
Adolescence Safety	Ambulance Systems of America/Norfolk Bristol
Family Planning	Lee Corrigan LeBlanc Family Planning Education
AIDS	Lee Corrigan LeBlanc Family Planning Education
Making Good Decisions and Staying in School	Carlton Rodriques Middle School Graduate
Drug Education	Deborah Brown Drug and Alcohol Educator
Violence Prevention Juvenile Crime	OCCC Prison Trip "Project Youth" Old Colony Correctional Center

APPENDIX M

COMMUNITY SPEAKER PRESENTATION INTRODUCTION LETTER

COMMUNITY SPEAKER PRESENTATION INTRODUCTION LETTER

January, 1995

Dear Parent,

I am enthused that I will be arranging our community speaker presentations in Mrs. Germaine's classroom again. The goal of the program is for speakers from different community agencies to visit our class and speak with our students on issues the students themselves have selected. This year I am excited to say we have some wonderful speakers who have positive messages for the kids. In the past the kids have responded well to our speakers. It has helped them become more aware of matters relating to the problems they themselves have identified. It has also helped them become more aware of decisions they will make in their everyday lives. It is our hope that through the intervention of our behavior team programs like this that the students will think about the consequences of their decisions before making them. It will also help them to further realize there are other people who care as well.

Here is a list of some of the problems the students have identfied that they would like further help with: violence, drugs, alcohol abuse, assault, probation, crime, sports, personal hygiene, birth control issues, AIDS, gangs, dating violence, weapons, and how they can succeed with special needs.

Some of our speakers from the community last year included the juvenile probation officer, the high school's drug coordinator, Gang Peace an antiviolence youth advocacy group, youth outreach programs through the correctional centers, the school nurse, Al-A-Teen and AA, Derek Sanderson, famous 1970's Bruins hockey star who speaks on drugs and youth making better decisions for themselves, Quinn Feno 1993 Red Sox draftee who speaks on special needs and motivating students and succeeding despite learning problems, Bristol County family planning educator, captain of the police department, and several other excellent speakers. At the end of this year, we will be making a visit to one of the southeastern MA correctional facilities youth programs which you will receive information and permission slips for in May.

Overall, the feedback from the kids over the past years has been very positive and the behavioral staff feels it has succeeded in having an impact on them in making better changes for themselves and their behavior. We are not only here to help our students, but parents as well and we feel

this type of program enhances our commitment to working with our kids.

If there is a sensitive issue you feel you would like your child to be exempt from, please let me know, but I assure you all the issues are relevant and I encourage the students to address them if they see it as a problem. You are welcome any time to join us.

On behalf of the staff, thank you for your support, and I am looking forward to our community speakers. Please contact me if there is anything I can assist with or if you should have any questions.

Sincerely,

Jody S. Persons
School Social Worker/
School Adjustment Counselor
Mulcahey/Martin Middle School
Taunton Public Schools

.....

Yes ___ I would like my son/daughter _____ to participate in the Community Speaker Program.

No ___ I would like my son/daughter _____ to not participate in the following issues.

_____
Parent Signature Date

APPENDIX N

LOCAL, STATE, AND NATIONAL LEGISLATORS

LOCAL, STATE, AND NATIONAL LEGISLATORS

National

President William Clinton
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20500

Senator Robert Dole
Russell Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20510

State

Governor William Weld
State House
Boston, MA 02133

Federal Congressman J. Joseph Moakley
Cannon House Office Bldg., Room 235
Washington, DC 20515
823-6676

Federal Senator Edward Kennedy
315 Russell Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20510

Federal Senator John Kerry
421 Russell Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20510

Local

State Representative James Fagan
State House, Room 26
Boston, MA 02133

State Senator Marc Pacheco
State House, Room 413F
Boston, MA 02133

Mayor Robert Nunes
City Hall
15 Summer Street
Taunton, MA 02780

Taunton Cares
Director Bob Camarata
City Hall
15 Summer Street
Taunton, MA 02780

*Please keep in mind if you write one letter, you can carbon copy it to the remainder of legislators.

APPENDIX O

VIOLENCE PREVENTION RESOURCE DIRECTORY

VIOLENCE PREVENTION RESOURCE DIRECTORY

Local

1-800-999-999	Violence Prevention Teen Hotline
1-617-673-3777	Samaritans Hotline A help line for suicide prevention
880-5649	Taunton Crimestopper Hotline
823-6546	Taunton Cares - Bob Cammarata Director Local group of professionals in conjunction with Mayor's office committed to preventing violence in Taunton.
823-5700	Crisis Center Hotline
1-800-792-5200	Child Abuse Hotline

State

1-617-424-5196	Health Promotion Program for Urban Youth Boston based reference for violence prevention.
1-508-946-3444	MA Prevention Center Resource Library Excellent resource center on violence prevention materials.
1-617-727-6088	MA Department of Public Health Office of Violence Prevention

National

1-800-638-8799 Ext. 212	National Association of School Social Workers (NASW) Public Service campaign to stop violence in conjunction with NASW - great informational packets.
1-800-FYI-CALL	National Victim Center Information-linkage program for victims.
1-800-222-2000	National Council for Child Abuse and Family Violence
1-800-662-HELP	National Institute on Drug Abuse Referral Line Referral source that will refer you to a local resource.

1-202-289-7319	Center to Prevent Handgun Violence
1-805-373-9977	National School Safety Center
1-202-544-7190	Coalition to Stop Gun Violence

APPENDIX P

CABLE TELEVISION ANTICRIME PROGRAM

CABLE TELEVISION ANTICRIME PROGRAM

CITY OF TAUNTON

MASSACHUSETTS

ROBERT G. NUNES, MAYOR

Telephone (508) 821-1000

June 15, 1995

Dear Parent:

In March 1993, I gathered a coalition of community leaders together to develop an anti-crime initiative entitled Taunton CARES (Community Awareness Results in Everyone's Safety). As of today, we have implemented twelve violence prevention programs in our schools and community.

My office, in conjunction with the Department of Human Services, TCI Cablevision and Ms. Nancy Norton have produced a three part series featuring Taunton CARES. Part one is an overview of the initiative featuring how to organize a neighborhood watch group, Captain Good's Crime Watch cable show and the gun buy back program. Part two features the impact of Community Policing on the neighborhoods, financial support to Taunton CARES and an overview of Bristol Plymouth High School's prevention programs that highlights student participation. Part three features several prevention initiatives in the Taunton Public Schools that also highlights student participation. The responsibilities of the Clinical Response Team is also featured.

The programs will air at 7:30 p.m. on June 26, July 3, July 9, and July 10th on TCI Cablevision Channel 27.

If you would like to participate in Taunton CARES, please feel free to call my office at 821-1000.

Sincerely,

Robert G. Nunes

Robert G. Nunes
Mayor

RGN/ce

APPENDIX Q

STUDENT VIOLENCE PREVENTION CONTRACT

STUDENT VIOLENCE PREVENTION CONTRACT

The Violence Prevention Program at Mulcahey School deals with violence and its effects on young people and their communities.

I _____ understand and accept that while we are discussing and studying the issues raised in the Violence Prevention Program:

- I will be respectful and sensitive to others.
- I will work as a team player.
- I will "agree to disagree."
- I will respect confidentiality.
- I will behave appropriately.

_____
Signature

_____
Date

APPENDIX R

VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAM CALENDAR

VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAM CALENDAR

WEEK	SESSION
1	"What is Violence?"
2	"Recognizing Violence in our Lives"
3	"What are the Risk Factors of Violence?"
4	"Exploring Risk Factors?
5	"Exploring More Risk Factors"
6	"Who are the Real Victims of Violence?"
7	"Understanding Anger"
8	"Anger Management"
9	"Conflict & Fighting"
10	"Conflict Resolution"
11	"Peer Mediation"
12	"Moving Forward in Peace"

APPENDIX S

STUDENT CONTRACT AGAINST PREJUDICE

STUDENT CONTRACT AGAINST PREJUDICE

By signing this contract, I pledge from this day onward to do my best to interrupt prejudice and to stop those who, because of hate, would hurt, harass or violate the civil rights of **ANYONE**.

_____ _____

My signature *Date*

APPENDIX T

PARENTS' NIGHT NOTICE

PARENTS NIGHT

How to Keep Our Children Safe

A Violence Prevention Approach for Middle School Children

Thursday, June 1, 1995 6:30-8:30 P.M.

Presented by: Jody S. Persons School Adjustment Counselor

John DaPaulo School Psychologist
Taunton Public Schools

Where: Mulcahey Middle School Library (2nd floor)

If you should have any questions, please contact us at 821-1256.

We will also be available after the presentation for further questions, support, referrals or assistance with individual concerns of your children. Please feel free to stay. Thank you for your interest and support.

APPENDIX U

SCHOOL PERSONNEL WORKSHOP TRAINING LETTER

SCHOOL PERSONNEL WORKSHOP TRAINING LETTER

May 2, 1995

Dear Staff,

John DaPaulo, our school psychologist, and I will be conducting an early release workshop training Thursday, May 4, 1995.

"Middle School Violence Prevention"
Mulcahey Library
12:30 - 2:30

I am in hopes the workshop will address many of the issues that staff identified in the previous needs assessments. Please bear with us and complete this brief questionnaire and bring it with you to the workshop. Also, May 15th through May 26th is "Increase the Peace Week" in Massachusetts. Taunton will be celebrating the week starting May 22nd, and Mulcahey will be conducting a student poster contest with the theme "Stop the Violence and Increase the Peace." First prize will be $15.00, second prize will be $10.00, and the third prize will be $5.00. The closing date is Friday, May 19th. All posters must be submitted to me or Mrs. Bettencourt.

I will be reviewing this contest at the workshop if you should have any questions. In addition, the workshop will be videotaped for a presentation on the local cable station.

Thank you for your interest and support.

See you then!

Jody S. Persons
School Social Worker/
School Adjustment Counselor
Mulcahey/Martin Middle School
Taunton Public Schools

APPENDIX V

SCHOOL PERSONNEL FOLLOW-UP WORKSHOP TRAINING LETTER

SCHOOL PERSONNEL FOLLOW-UP WORKSHOP TRAINING LETTER

May 25, 1995

Dear Staff,

Because we had to shorten our violence prevention presentation during the last early release day (May 4, 1995), we apologize for not being able to get to the solution and strategies as we had originally planned. To compensate, John and I will be concluding our presentation this early release day June 1, 1995.

"Solutions, Resources, & Effective Strategies
for Violence Prevention in the Middle School"
Mulcahey Library
12:30 to 2:30

Because the solution component will not encompass the entire early release time span, we will be available after the presentation for further questions, support, or assistance with individual students. Please feel free to take advantage of this time if there is anything we can assist with.

Thank you for your interest and support.

Sincerely,

Jody S. Persons
School Social Worker/
School Adjustment Counselor
Mulcahey/Martin Middle School
Taunton Public Schools